

Relax, renew, revive! Poses to refresh your body and mind

yoga

JOURNAL

Build core
power for
balance and
stability

LIFE IN BALANCE

Be
joyful

*A practice for
true happiness*

4 poses
to prevent
knee pain

Find the balance you seek
Deepak Chopra has your plan

29 unique & meaningful
holiday gift ideas

The healing
power of yoga

6 inspiring
stories, page 80

warming
winter
recipes

Cover model **Leah Cullis**
on cultivating gratitude
and optimism





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DECEMBER 2014

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Reach places previously only accessible by paw.



Introducing the all-new 2015 Subaru Outback. At 33 mpg*, it's the most fuel-efficient midsize crossover in America! Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive with X-MODE™ provides go-anywhere traction and stability. Being named a 2014 IIHS Top Safety Pick provides peace of mind. All to better help you explore the season. **Love. It's what makes a Subaru, a Subaru.**



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get more



Find your balance by the Bay

Set the stage for a happy, healthy, transformative 2015 by joining 35 top yoga teachers in San Francisco for Yoga Journal LIVE!, January 15–19. The list of classes is long and enticing, but highlights include restorative yoga nidra with mantra musician Sheela Bringi, a hip-opening flow class with Janet Stone, plus an A Tribe Called Quest–inspired class with MC Yogi, Amanda Giacomini, and DJ Drez. Register early for best prices at yjevents.com/sf.



Connect with us!

Share your favorite moments from the LIVE! event on social: [#yogajournal](https://twitter.com/yogajournal) [#yjlive](https://twitter.com/yjlive)

GIFT GIVEAWAY

Love the Ayurveda-inspired gift ideas on pages 17–20? We're giving away some of our favorites the first three Mondays in December! Enter for your chance to win at yogajournal.com/holidaygiveaway.



Help us fight homelessness

Winter can be the hardest time for anyone living on the streets, and especially for the 1.6 million American children who experience homelessness each year. *Yoga Journal* is dedicating the December issue to families with no place to live, and coordinating a goods drive for the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, a local organization that helps thousands in our area each year. If you're giving back to the homeless in your community, tell us about it and tag us on Instagram [@yogajournal](https://www.instagram.com/yogajournal) with [#yjendhomelessness](https://www.instagram.com/yjendhomelessness).

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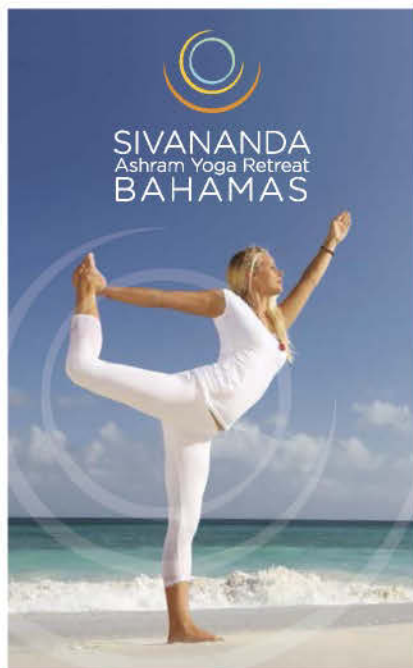
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thoughts of home

THIS FALL, MY HUSBAND AND I bought our first home. Nothing big or fancy by any stretch, but enough room for our little family, dog, and cat, and to roll out my yoga mat for some home practice (which, yes, often looks a lot like those funny videos floating around on Facebook of pets and toddlers interrupting yoga practice). As we're preparing to host family for the holidays, and as the temperature drops and the mountains around us become blanketed with snow, I'm feeling extremely grateful for all that I have—and increasingly mindful of the families who aren't as fortunate.

Numbers on homelessness in America are constantly shifting, but on any given day, there are more than 600,000 people with no place to live, and one in 45 children experience homelessness each year—that's 1.6 million kids! Those are devastating numbers. When I learned about our Good Karma yogi, Kate Holcombe, who's teaching yoga to homeless families in San Francisco, I was moved and impressed by how much it's helping the parents find the calm and relief from stress and physical pain they need to care for their little ones and bring about vital life changes (page 90).

In honor of families who are struggling without shelter and food, and of good people like Kate who are trying to help them, I'm dedicating this issue of *Yoga Journal* to ending homelessness, and am organizing a drive in our offices to collect needed goods such as blankets, towels, and warm winter cloth-

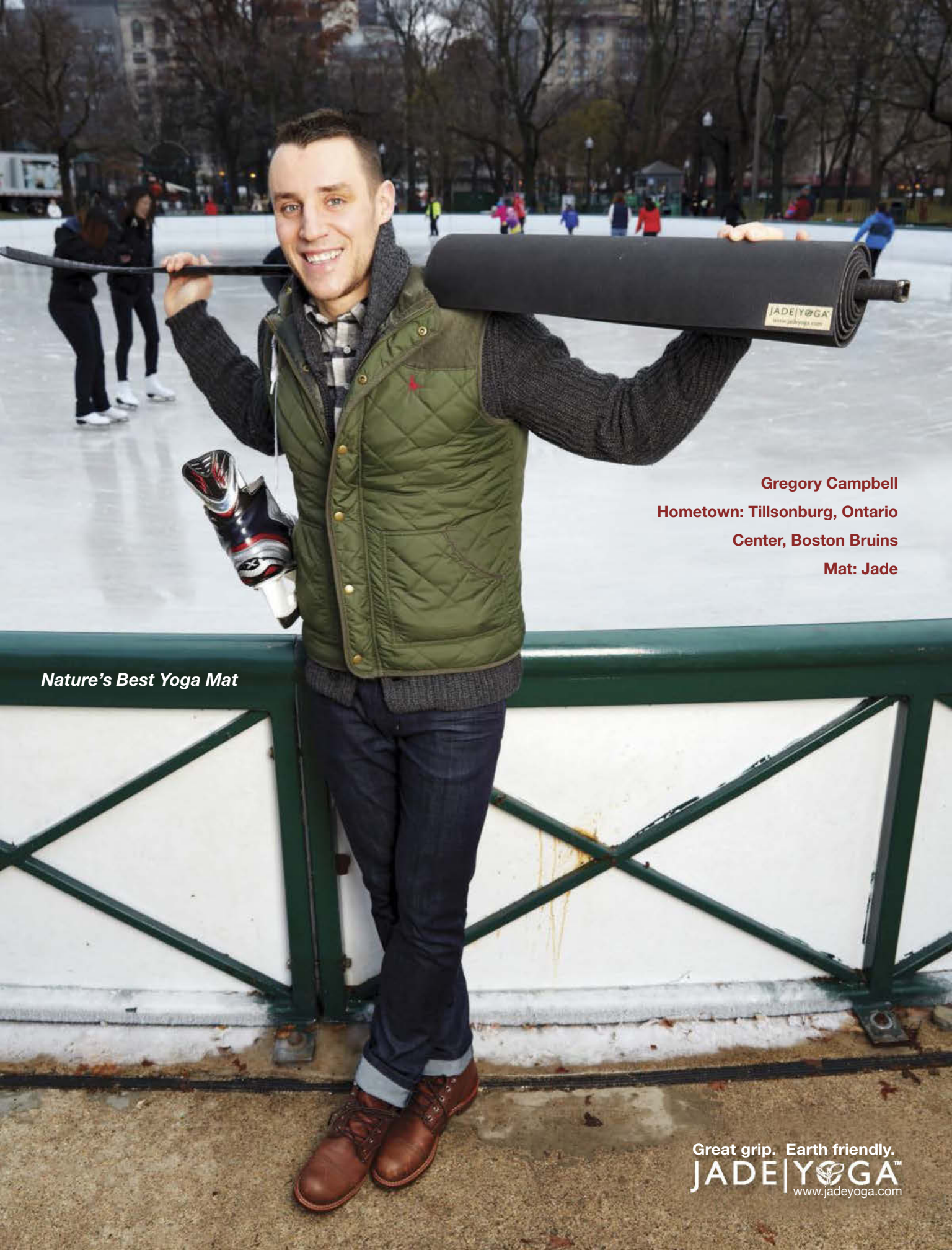


ing for the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless this December. If you're doing something similar in your own community this season, tell us about it on Instagram @yogajournal with #yjendhomelessness and help us to fuel the movement.

Besides Kate's work, there are plenty of other things to inspire you and your practice in this issue's pages. For instance, Deepak Chopra, MD, offers a thoughtful exercise on connecting with your core self in "Enrich Your Life" (page 26). On page 80, six yogis share how their practice changed and even saved their lives ("Get Inspired"). And cover model Leah Cullis teaches a celebratory home practice sequence to help you "Open up to Joy" on page 47.

From our *Yoga Journal* family to yours, we wish you the gifts of warmth, nourishment, love, and peace this holiday season and beyond.

Carin Gorrell
Editor in Chief



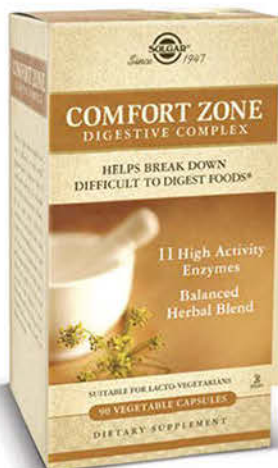
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Sweet News

The latest superfood superstar: raw chocolate, dark chocolate's slightly stronger, nuttier-tasting cousin. It has approximately three times the disease-fighting antioxidants of dark chocolate because it's never heated above 45 degrees, which companies claim helps retain the antioxidants and enzymes that can get lost during dark- and milk-chocolate production. Raw chocolate can taste bitter, so start with bars that add fruit to help tame the bite. One to try: Righteously Raw (available at Whole Foods and other natural grocers), which comes in creative flavors like rose, açai, goji, and maca.

what's
the

Yogi

news
trends
inspiration

Listen Up

Regularly popping over-the-counter pain relievers for minor aches and pains can come with an unexpected consequence: hearing loss that appears to be permanent. For instance, Harvard University researchers found that women who took ibuprofen four to five days a week had a 21 percent greater risk for hearing loss over a 14-year period than women who took it less than once a week. The researchers suspect the meds restrict blood flow to the cochlea, the ear's snail-shaped hearing center. The next time you're inclined to pop an OTC pill, try these natural and effective pain remedies first:

For a headache

Try Viparita Karani
(Legs-up-the-Wall Pose)

Lie on your back and lift your legs to a 90-degree angle, flush with a wall (see the pose on page 72). Spending 5–10 minutes here can help release the tight neck muscles that can trigger a tension headache.

For muscle aches

Try sniffing rosemary oil

The scent of rosemary eases muscle soreness by dialing down stress hormones that can cause you to tense up, a study suggests. Sniff rosemary essential oil for 5 minutes or brew some rosemary tea and inhale the aroma before each sip.

For joint pain

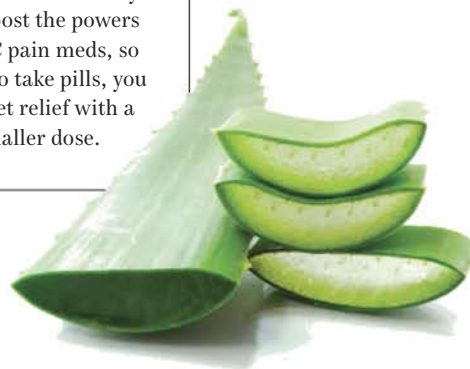
Try aloe vera juice

Sipping a few ounces of aloe vera juice has been shown to help reduce joint-tissue inflammation. It may also boost the powers of OTC pain meds, so if you do take pills, you may get relief with a smaller dose.



MILE-HIGH YOGA

The largest “high-altitude” training room in North America is now offering a Summit Yoga class. Located in Pleasanton, California, The Quad’s hypoxic chamber maintains just the right amount of oxygen during class to mimic a mile-high altitude, the equivalent of doing yoga in Denver. The logic: practicing at altitude pumps up the heart rate for a more vigorous class, and over time may teach your body to become more efficient at using oxygen.



Start Smart

Yoga newbies and recent returnees can turn to Rodney Yee’s *Complete Yoga for Beginners*, the newest DVD release from this international teacher. Available this month, the 90-minute video is divided into four gentle sequences, including Yoga Basics, a slow-paced practice that breaks down Mountain, Plank, and Cobra poses and simple bends and twists. Use it to gain confidence for class, learn new poses, or refresh on alignment if you’ve taken a break from your mat (\$15, amazon.com).

31%

Reduction in feelings of anxiety that pregnant women experience after just one prenatal yoga class.

Depression and Anxiety journal



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Gift GUIDE

Searching for meaningful gift ideas?
Use the ancient wisdom of Ayurveda
to find inspiration for friends and loved
ones based on their dominant *doshas*.

By Katy Lindenmuth

Dsenyo Fair Trade ornaments, pictured above, are handcrafted in Brazil and are perfect for any dosha type (\$12–24, dsenyo.com).

KAPHA

{ tend to be calm, sentimental, low energy, and slow moving }

The *kaphas* in your life will benefit from gifts that perk them up. Go for bright, bold reds and oranges and stimulating scents, such as clove, says Ayurveda expert Niika Quistgard, founder of *ayurmama.com*. A journal serves as a first step toward richer self-expression, an adjustable tablet stand makes it easier to set up an energetic home practice, and sunglasses supply an instant boost of confidence.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Talbott Teas Tea-lightful Gift Set (\$72.50, talbottteas.com); Spider Monkey by Octa tablet accessory (\$80, octa.com); Caldrea Plum Bergamot Clove lotion, hand soap, and candle tin (lotion and hand soap, \$10.50 each; candle, \$13; caldrea.com); Bronwen Ribbon Wrap Bracelet (\$36–82, bronwenonline.com); Eccolo Go in Search of Life and Gold Damask journals (\$15–20, amazon.com); Soulie Pure Inspiration Yoga Bag and Kulae tpECOMat (bag, \$158; mat, \$58; store.yogajournal.com); Dharma Eyewear Karma Sunglasses (\$99, with 5 percent of the proceeds donated to Optometry Giving Sight, dharmaco.com).

PITTA

{ tend to be intense, outspoken go-getters who easily overheat }

The best gifts for *pittas* are those that cool off their fieriness or help tone down their intensity. Go for soft, soothing blues and purples and relaxing scents like lavender or chamomile. An inspirational quote on the wall provides a feel-good moment during busy days, a cooling gel mask and pillow mist make it easier to get to bed on time, and reusable gift bags appeal to *pittas'* practical side.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Great Useful Stuff Reusable Gift Bags (\$25 for four bags, greatusefulstuff.com); Global Goods Partners Purple Silk Scarf (\$40, globalgoodspartners.org); Earth Therapeutics Sleep Gel Mask and Anti-Stress Pillow Mist (mask, \$9; mist, \$8; earththerapeutics.com); travel-friendly, compact Yogo Mat in indigo (\$65, store.yogajournal.com); Ling Feeling Calm Body Balm Butter (\$45, lingskincare.com); Soko Sky Blue Shine Bracelet, which is handcrafted in Kenya through a partnership between Soko and Africa Yoga Project (\$40, shopsoko.com); Pukka Peppermint & Licorice Tea (\$7, iherb.com); Amanda Paulson for Minted Emerson Quote (\$29 for a framed 5" x 7" of this crowdsourced design-winner, minted.com).

VATA

{ tend to be creative, high-strung multitaskers who often feel cold }

Vatas will appreciate gifts that warm them up, soften rough skin, and bring a sense of calm. Go for warm pastels, yellows, and greens and gentle, grounding scents like vanilla. Flowering tea is both hydrating and relaxing, home door liners keep out cold air, and weekly inspirational lessons and gifts provide a much-needed me-time ritual.

WIN!

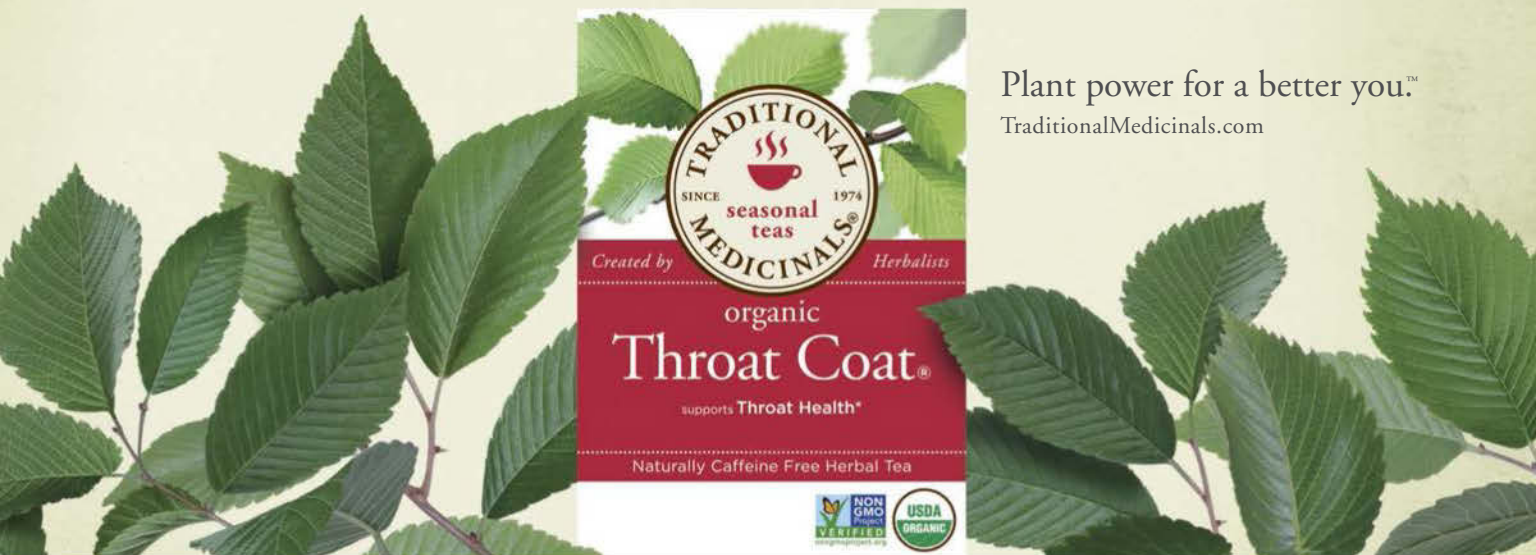
Enter for your chance to score some of these gifts at yogajournal.com/holiday-giveaway. Winners drawn first three Mondays in December.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The Evolution Bag in Kenzo Green by OuterPeaceDesign and Gaiam Tree of Life Yoga Mat (bag, \$78, outerpeacedesign.com; mat, \$22, store.yogajournal.com); 12-week subscription to VowTo EnRitualize Foundation Program, with lessons and gifts that promote self-care and conscious living (\$99–299, vowto.com); Ogsplush Fox Door Draft Stopper (\$18, ogsplush.etsy.com); The Dragontree Balance Lotion (\$8–17, thedragontree.com); Jenny Present Live for Today Inspirational Necklace, LifeNotes (\$89, jennypresent.com); Elk High Neck Poncho in wheat (\$220, elkaccessories.com); Numi Flowering Tea Set in Bamboo (\$40, numitea.com).



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make SCENTS

To fill your home with festive scents this season, give store-bought air fresheners a pass—many contain phthalates, chemicals that can cause hormonal abnormalities, birth defects, and reproductive issues, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council. Instead, make your own. Choose a four-ounce amber glass bottle (dark glass protects the oils from light) that has an atomizer top and tube (available at sunburstbottle.com). Fill the bottle with distilled water to just below the neck, and then add three to four drops of pure essential oil and spritz away, even on linens, says Margo L. Hanson, a massage-therapist supervisor at Topnotch Resort in Stowe, Vermont, who makes aromatherapy blends from essential oils for the spa. To open the senses, use one drop of eucalyptus and two to three drops of white thyme, or try one drop each of peppermint and pine and two drops of rosewood to remind you of snowy woods. KAREN ASP



Answers to your questions about hot yoga, managing emotions, and practice-friendly breakfasts.

Does going from a hot yoga class into cold winter weather set me up for injury?

Yes, if you head straight out the door post-class. Cooling down too quickly constricts blood vessels, rapidly slowing your circulation and tightening muscles. This places you at greater risk for injuries like muscle pulls. Plus, extreme temperature swings can weaken your immune system and put you at risk for colds. But this doesn't mean you must ditch your hot yoga practice during winter! In fact, it has some cold-season benefits: It raises your heart rate and core temperature, which dilates blood vessels and increases circulation in your muscles—a boon because muscles are typically stiffer in cold weather. Just be sure to wait 5 to 10 minutes after class before heading outside, to allow your core temperature to normalize. And bundle up with a heavy coat, warm hat, and gloves.

Karena Wu

Physical therapist and owner of ActiveCare Physical Therapy, New York City

Sometimes in yoga class I grow irritated—especially when a teacher doesn't follow a sequence I'm used to. What can I do about it?

Practicing yoga isn't causing your frustrated emotions, but it may bring existing emotions to the surface. The next time this happens, don't try to suppress those feelings, but consider this an opportunity for self-inquiry. Bring attention to your breathing and the sensations throughout your body. Observe the emotion you're feeling, and think about why you're feeling it. Then, identify the emotion again but let go of the "why." Just allow this feeling to be what it is, as you are experiencing it. Settle into the present moment, becoming aware of your heart and your entire body.

Bija Bennett

Yoga therapist and author of *Emotional Yoga: How the Body Can Heal the Mind*

I know that I should eat before my 10 a.m. yoga class, but when I do, I often become nauseous in class—what should I eat?

What you eat depends on how much time you have between breakfast and your class. If you eat one to two hours before a vinyasa class, have a small meal containing slow-digesting complex carbohydrates, for lasting energy, and protein and healthy fats, to keep you satiated. Try 1/4 cup cooked oats sprinkled with walnuts and a dollop of plain Greek yogurt. But if you are eating only 15 minutes before class starts, opt for a snack with easily digestible natural sugars and only a touch of fat and protein, which are heavier to digest and can lead to an upset stomach. Prepare a simple smoothie containing 1 date, 1/2 frozen banana, 1 cup unsweetened almond milk, and a dash of cinnamon.

Jennifer Vagios, RD

Yoga teacher and nutritionist

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enrich your life

Deepak Chopra shares a practice for finding what you seek.



A PIONEER IN THE FIELD of mind-body medicine and author of dozens of best-selling books on Eastern philosophy and personal transformation, Deepak Chopra, MD, is known for bringing traditional wisdom to contemporary issues. In his latest book, *The Future of God: A Practical Approach to Spirituality for Our Times*, he dives into the question of the existence of God, and offers his own thought-provoking approach to the ongoing debate between skeptics and believers. He doesn't give black-and-white answers; rather, he encourages readers to explore their own inner sense of these questions and provides a framework and a set of practices to help each of us discover answers within.

In the excerpt offered here, Dr. Chopra gives new meaning to the term “spiritual seeker,” explaining that true seeking is not a journey to find wisdom outside yourself, but a deeply personal process of introspection. Try the four-step practice below to begin to tap into your personal guiding principles, from which you can live a life of integrity and connection to your core self.

Survey your true desires

You are a seeker if these ingredients exist inside you. They may only be seeds; nonetheless you feel a stirring within you, some sort of desire percolating inside.

- ✓ The desire to be real
- ✓ The courage to step into the unknown
- ✓ A refusal to be fooled by illusions
- ✓ The need to feel fulfilled
- ✓ The ability to go beyond material satisfaction
- ✓ An intimation of other levels of existence

The material world is chaotic, filled with events beyond anyone's personal control. To be a seeker, you are required not to conquer the chaos but to see through it. The Vedic tradition uses a clever metaphor for this: A seeker must walk through a herd of sleeping elephants without waking them up. The elephants are your old condition-

ing, which insists that you are weak, isolated, and abandoned. You can't fight this conditioning, because once you wake it up, your fear, insecurity, and certainty that you must struggle to survive will have tremendous power. Once the elephants wake up, they'll trample you.

So the world's wisdom traditions figured out another way through. Sneak past these obstacles, without trying to fight them head on. Shift your allegiance, silently and inwardly. Stop being ruled by chaos and be ruled by your core self.

To become a seeker, you don't have to walk away and exist as an outsider from society; you aren't required to turn your back on those who love you or to proselytize a set of new beliefs. Those are the customary trappings of religious conversion. Instead, reexamine your present situation. Sit down and confront what your existence is about.

Step 1: Rate your outer activities

In one column, list the external things you put effort into. Beside each category, put down a number, either the hours a week you devote to this activity or how much you value the activity, on a scale from 1 to 10.

Here's a sample list:

- ☐ Family and friends
- ☐ Career
- ☐ School, higher education
- ☐ Wealth, property, and possessions
- ☐ Politics
- ☐ Hobbies
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Sex
- ☐ Entertainment
- ☐ Travel
- ☐ Church attendance
- ☐ Service organizations and charity

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Step 2: Rate your inner pursuits

In another column, make a list of the inner activities that you put effort into. Rate these things, too, with a number, reflecting the value you put on each one or how much time you devote to it.

Here are some examples:

- ☐ Meditation
- ☐ Contemplation
- ☐ Prayer or self-reflection
- ☐ Stress management
- ☐ Reading spiritual literature
- ☐ Psychotherapy and personal growth
- ☐ Bonding with someone else empathically
- ☐ Appreciation and gratitude, toward yourself and others
- ☐ Exploring the world's wisdom traditions
- ☐ Taking a period of silence
- ☐ Going on a spiritual retreat

Step 3: Compare your priorities

Now compare the two lists. They will give you a rough sense of where your allegiance lies between the inner and outer. I'm not suggesting you play a spiritual blame game—almost everyone predominantly pursues outward activities. The material world holds us fast. And remember, it's alright for inward activities to take place in the material world; they can be part of one's daily routine.

Step 4: Assess your life's focus and set goals

Unless you devote time and attention to inward things, you are not seeking. Being pious and doing good works are not a substitute. They remain all too often on the external plane. If you wish to set spiritual goals, I'd begin with two that have nothing to do with religion and everything to do with getting real: Find your center, and then run your life from there. Both goals are necessary. If you leave out one, the other will have limited use.

Finding your center means settling into a stable, coherent state of awareness. Outer forces do not dominate you. You're not restless, anxious, worried, or unfocused. The second goal is running your life from your center, which means obeying your subtle inner guidance, such as instinct, intuition, love, self-knowledge, trust, and compassion.

Take a look at your life and assess which of these two lists sounds like you right now:

You are finding your center when you:

- ✓ Act with integrity
- ✓ Speak your truth
- ✓ Remain unswayed by the need to be liked
- ✓ Do not fear authority
- ✓ Respect your personal dignity and others'
- ✓ Remain self-reliant, not dependent on others
- ✓ Do not blind yourself with denial and self-deceptions
- ✓ Practice tolerance
- ✓ Become slow to anger and quick to forgive
- ✓ Aim to understand others as well as you understand yourself

You aren't living from your center when you:

- ✓ Focus on external rewards
- ✓ Crave approval from others
- ✓ Open yourself easily to outside influences
- ✓ Put too much emphasis on rules
- ✓ Set yourself up as an authority
- ✓ Compete as if winning is the only thing that matters
- ✓ Gossip and belittle others
- ✓ Hold on to prejudice or ideology
- ✓ Seek revenge
- ✓ Skirt the truth
- ✓ Keep your inner world a secret

Once you achieve the two goals, your material world will hold together in the same way that you hold together. Inner and outer will no longer be two separate domains; you will have made them connect. You can operate from a core of integrity and express your true self. That's how a person learns to overcome the material world's chaos and fragmentation.

This project of seeking that I've outlined is existential, to put it in a word. The courage to be has traced a path to a solid sense of what it means to be real.

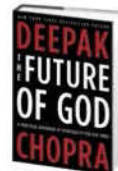
When you begin to suspect that you are the author of your own existence, seeking has begun.

When you use your awareness to actively shape your life, seeking has brought answers.

When you look around and know that reality is based entirely on consciousness, seeking has reached its goal.

The next stage is to journey deeper, always moving toward the source of creation, which is where real power lies. Seeking takes place in the material world, but finding happens somewhere else. ☯

Reprinted from *The Future of God*,
Harmony Books, an imprint of Random
House, November 2014.





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practice

WELL

indoor SUP

Devotees of standup paddleboard (SUP) yoga no longer have to abandon the board in winter. Studios and gyms across North America are offering indoor SUP classes that supply stationary boards as your base instead of mats, with at least 125 locations in the United States and Canada, and another 85 in the works for next year. The appeal? "By working on an unstable surface, you're strengthening your core and all of the stabilization muscles that you don't use as much in a regular yoga class," says Kimberly Trefilek, a Surfset Fitness indoor-SUP teacher and owner of Moirai Health and Fitness in Chicago. Go to indoboard.com or surfsetfitness.com to find classes in your area. KAREN ASP

Surfset Fitness class at Bliss Ann Green Yoga studio in Barrie, Ontario.



IT TAKES TREMENDOUS strength, balance, and focus to charge down a mountain while strapped to a board alternating between your heel and toe edge, absorbing—or launching from—bumps along the way. This means snowboarders who spend time on the yoga mat are better prepared for a graceful, injury-free season of riding. “Yoga helps snowboarders develop body awareness and deliberate movement patterns, so they can advance in the sport, whether they’re experts or novice, once-a-year mountain-goers,” says Nicole Mucciolo, a yoga teacher to snowboarders of all skill levels at the Vitality Center in Vail, Colorado. Get started with these poses that strengthen your feet, tone your quads, and help protect your knees for many rides to come. Happy shredding!

poses for snowboarding

By Erin Hardy



High Lunge

GOOD FOR toning the entire leg, improving coordination, and stretching the hip flexors

Start from Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose) and step your right foot forward between your hands. Bring arms overhead. Bend front knee deeply so that it’s directly over the ankle, and press through the back heel. Gently square the hips forward, lengthen the tailbone down, and draw the lower belly up. Find a focal point and hold for 10 breaths. Switch sides.

Utkatasana (Chair Pose) with block

GOOD FOR toning the quadriceps, inner thighs, feet, and core; helps promote proper knee alignment

Stand with feet hip-width apart and place a block on its narrow side between your thighs. Bend your knees and lower your hips to take a seat. Squeeze the block and check that kneecaps are tracking straight over the second and third toes. Shift weight into heels as you draw the lower belly up. Hold for 5 breaths. Shift weight into balls of the feet, lift your heels, and hold for 5 more breaths.



Virasana (Hero Pose) with block and mat

GOOD FOR stretching thighs, knees, and ankles; strengthens back and core muscles

Kneel with your legs close together, and place a rolled mat behind your knees and a block between feet. Sit back on block, rest hands on thighs, and bring index finger to thumb in Gyan Mudra (targets root chakra for a sense of calm). Lift the crown of your head. Hold for 10 breaths.

Utkata Konasana (Goddess Pose) with arms in prayer

GOOD FOR toning the feet and legs, coordinating balance, and building upper-back strength

Take a wide stance; pull heels in slightly and point toes outward. Bend your knees and sit down so thighs are parallel to the ground. Track knees over second and third toes. Press your thighs back while pressing pubic bone forward and pulling lower belly up. Lift chest and bring hands together in prayer. Hold for 10 breaths.



OUR PRO Writer and model **Erin Hardy** teaches a Yoga for Snowboarders workshop at her studio, The Yoga Mat, in Denver.

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Poses of the month

How to move from Vrksasana
to Svarga Dvijasana

By Claire Missingham

Vrksasana

vrksa = tree · asana = pose

Tree Pose

Benefit

Establishes strength and balance in the legs, and helps you feel centered, steady, and grounded

Instruction

1 Stand with your feet together, inner ankles and inner knees touching. Find a straight line of energy through the center of the body, from the inner arches up through the crown of the head. Bring the hands together at the center of the chest in Anjali Mudra. Exhale, root down through your feet, and feel steadiness, firmness, and grounding in Tadasana, or Mountain Pose.

2 Shift your weight onto your right foot. Bend your left knee, and move it into the chest. Keeping a long spine, reach down and clasp your left ankle. Place the sole of the left foot on the inner right thigh.

3 Lengthen your tailbone toward the floor to stand tall and bring your *drishti*, or gaze, to the wall directly in front of you to help you balance.

4 Press your left foot into the inner right thigh and your right thigh into your foot in an effort to maintain your midline.

5 Square both hips to the front of the room, keeping your left knee moving out to the left.

6 Firm your outer right thigh by contracting the quadriceps muscles, or the front of the thighs. Zip your belly in and your lower ribs together. Lift the chest and bring the shoulder blades down.

7 Take 5–10 deep breaths, finding length on each inhale and rooting down with each exhale.

8 Exhale and release the left leg back to Tadasana. Repeat on the other side.



DON'T turn out the foot on the standing, supporting leg. This will misalign the supporting knee and hip.



DON'T place your foot on the opposite knee. Keep it above or below the knee, on the inner thigh or side of the shin, to protect the knee of the standing leg.



OUR PRO Teacher and model **Claire Missingham** is an international yoga teacher based in London. To find out more about her, please visit claireyoga.com or follow her on [instagram.com/clairemmissingham](https://www.instagram.com/clairemmissingham).

Vrksasana

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Modify Vrksasana if needed to find safe alignment for your body.

If you are having trouble balancing ...

TRY practicing with the support of a wall. Start in Tadasana with your right side about half an arm's length from the wall. Raise the right arm and place the right hand on the wall for support. Shift your weight into the right leg, and on an inhalation bend the left leg, bringing the foot to the inner thigh. Keep the right leg firm and both hips facing forward. Lengthen both sides of the waist equally. Take 5–10 deep breaths before practicing on the other side.



If you can't keep a straight spine ...

TRY Reclined Bent-Leg Tree. Lie on your back with your legs out in front of you and together. Bring your left knee up to your chest. Place your right hand on your right hip to prevent you from rolling to the left. Exhale and open the left leg to the side, foot on the inner right thigh, bent knee moving toward the floor (you may need to place a block under the right knee if it is not supported by the floor). Take 5–10 breaths, then switch sides.

If lifting the leg to the opposite thigh is difficult ...

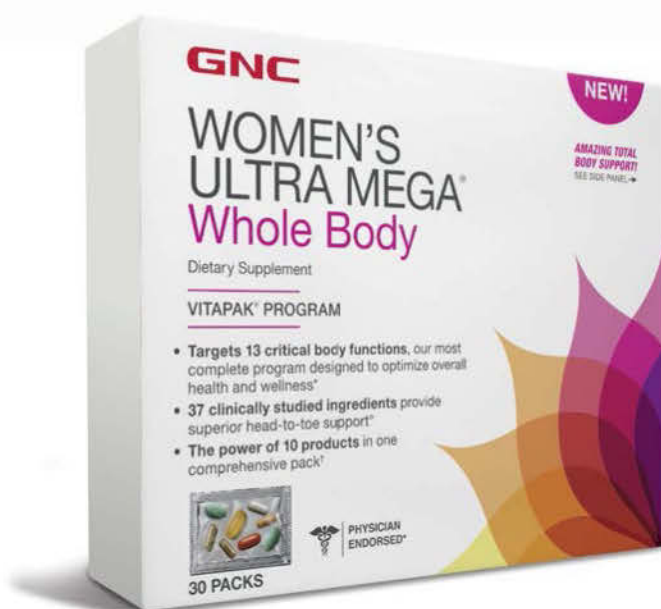
TRY keeping your toes on the floor. Start in Tadasana with feet together. Ground down. Externally rotate your left leg, bend the knee, and place the ball of the left foot on the floor, with the heel resting on the right inner shin. Bring your hands into Anjali Mudra at the chest, taking 5 deep breaths. This pose also gently introduces how much you need to use your core muscles (especially the obliques) in order to balance with one leg open to the side. Switch sides.



RE-ENERGIZE YOUR PRACTICE

Our peak pose is Svarga Dvijasana, or Bird of Paradise. Dvija means "twice born" and Svarga means "paradise" or "heaven." The aim of this asana is to experience the depth of paradise and renewal within the body by emulating the shape of a tropical flower, the Bird of Paradise. (Birds also embody renewal, as they are essentially born twice, first as an egg and second as a bird.) Few asanas re-create such a beautiful, natural image. As your body unfolds in this demanding balance, your extended leg creates a powerful, energizing spark that keeps you lifted. The pose requires integrity of form and strength, while opening you up to vulnerability, like a flower.

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Learn to find your center of balance and open your hamstrings in these **prep poses** for Svarga Dvijasana.



Baddha Trikonasana
(Bound Triangle Pose)

Benefit

Opens your chest and shoulders, strengthens your legs, and lengthens your sides

Instruction

From Virabhadrasana II, or Warrior Pose II, with the left foot forward, place the left hand on the instep side of the left foot. Ensure that the back toes are turned in about 45 degrees and the back heel is down. Extend your right hand to the sky, then wrap it behind your back. Feed your left hand under your left thigh until the hands clasp. Firming the back leg, gently press your hips forward as your chest and torso rotate toward the sky, then begin to extend the left leg until it is completely straight. Engage the quads and spread the front toes for balance. Bring your drishti over your right shoulder, and take 5–10 breaths before changing sides.

Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana
(Extended Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose)

Benefit

Gives you a strong sense of where your central axis is, allowing you to balance

Instruction

From Tadasana, bring your left knee up to your chest. Reach your left arm inside the thigh and take hold of the outside of your left foot firmly. Pull up the front thigh muscles of the right leg, and press the outer right thigh inward. Straighten the left leg, then take it out to the side. Take 5–10 breaths, keeping the supporting leg straight and the chest open. Slowly release the leg back down and switch sides.

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Vrksasana
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Akarna Dhanurasana, variation (Archer Pose, variation)

Benefit

Opens the hips, stretches the hamstrings, and strengthens the back muscles used for sitting and standing up straight

Instruction

Sit on the floor with the legs together and straight out in front of you, hands alongside

your hips, in Dandasana (Staff Pose). Inhale and bend the left knee back behind the armpit area (rather than out to the side), bringing your left foot up to your chest. Keep the spine long and hold the sole of the foot firmly with the left hand. The sole of the foot should point forward or up to the sky. Place the right hand on the floor for support or reach down and bind the fingers around the big toe of the right foot in a yogi toe lock. The right leg stays strong, quads engaged. Bring the drishti over your left shoulder. Hold for 5–10 breaths before releasing and changing sides.

Svarga Dvijasana
prep

Svarga Dvijasana,
pages 40–41

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Unfold and extend **step by step** into Svarga Dvijasana.

Benefit

A challenging balance that incorporates hip opening, core and back strengthening, and hamstring lengthening

Instruction

1 Start in Warrior Pose II, with a bent left leg, right foot turned in slightly, and a firm, straight back leg. Inhale and take your arms to shoulder height. Exhale and bring your left arm under the left thigh, and your right arm to the sky, then behind your back. Clasp the left wrist with the right hand. Keeping the left leg bent, twist the torso to the sky as you gently press the hips forward. Your drishti is over your right shoulder as you settle into Baddha Uthita Parsvakonasana, or Bound Extended Side Angle Pose.

2 Exhale and look down. Turn both your feet parallel and then carefully start to move them toward one another. Once the legs are close to hip distance, straighten them both and twist your torso to the right, keeping the bind and finding Baddha Uttanasana, or Bound Standing Forward Bend.

3 Pour all of your weight into your right foot and start to lift your torso, bringing the left leg off the floor. Keep the supporting foot's toes spread; your weight should be evenly distributed between the big toe, little toe, and inner and outer heel, maintaining 4 points of balance. Keep the lifted leg bent in this Svarga Dvijasana variation—Bird of Paradise with a bent leg.



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Svarga Dvijasana

svarga = paradise · dvija = twice born · asana = pose

Bird of Paradise Pose



4 Open the chest and extend the lifted leg to the side, being careful not to swing the supporting hip out to the side. You're aiming to find stability and ease in equal measure. Open your chest proudly, engaging the muscles across your back to hold your heart high. If you start to teeter, revert to a bent left leg and regain stability in the right leg by pressing evenly into all four corners of the standing foot and visualizing a line down the middle of the body that you are hugging into.

5 Fix the drishti straight ahead or over the right shoulder and stay for 5–10 deep breaths, embodying the beauty, stability, and vibrancy of the Bird of Paradise flower.

Stay safe

If the central axis of the body becomes displaced, you may compromise the knee and hip joints. Aim to keep the supporting foot facing forward, toes spread, with the knee over the ankle, and the supporting hip plugged into the midline. Keep the quadriceps on both legs contracted, allowing the standing leg to support you more fully and the hamstrings on the extended leg to open further without strain.



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With Leah Cullis

Power Vinyasa Yoga teacher and creator of this month's Home Practice Leah Cullis talks about doing yoga at the White House and the power of commitment and positivity.

Q What life events started you on your path to becoming a yoga teacher?

A I was a college cheerleader and had a pretty severe fall. I sprained my neck and hurt my back. But I dove into school and work rather than trying to heal my body. I graduated and started work on political campaigns, working around the clock and sleeping with my Blackberry on my pillow. A few years in, I held a large fundraising event for a presidential candidate, and ended up in the ER with numbness in my back, legs, and face on the right side. At first, the doctors thought stroke or MS, but I was having severe muscle spasms from my old injury. That was my wake-up call. My body was forcing me to pay attention.

Q How did you respond?

A I made changes, baby steps—I started taking Sundays off work, and that turned into taking weekends off and turning off my phone at night. I did my first yoga teacher training and started teaching. In 2008, the candidate I was fundraising for lost the primary and I was interviewing for other political jobs. Then it hit me: Why not start teaching yoga full-time? The door was opening for me—it was a chance to share what was in my heart and was true to me.

Q For the last six years, you've organized yoga classes for close to 30,000 attendees at the annual White House Easter Egg Roll—what's that experience like?

A It's exhilarating to be able to share a practice that's been so transformational in my life in the most powerful place on Earth. And it comes with a responsibility to hold true with the teachings that have been shared with me—not just the physical practice, but also living yoga through connection, joy, play, and love. We end every class explaining what Namaste means in a way kids can understand: "I'm awesome and you're awesome, too!"

Q What's one important life lesson you try to share as a yoga teacher?

A We always have a choice about how we're showing up in life. In every moment and in every pose, we can choose to expand or contract. Nothing is fixed because we have that choice. My highest aim is to expand love and light. If I'm committed to that in my practice, in how I eat, in my

career and relationships, I'm also sharing that with others. People feel your commitment. We're all teaching all the time, whether you're in the yoga room or walking through a grocery store—you're creating a ripple effect.

Q You're also a holistic health and nutrition coach. What's your food philosophy?

A The two simplest ways you can invite more vitality and energy into your life and body are through movement and food. Your food choices create every cell in your body. We have an opportunity to practice at least three times every day with what we put on our plate! There's not one right way of eating; we each have a unique path. But I always suggest eating as close to the source as possible, buying from the farmer or locally owned markets. You can change so much about the way you eat by where you shop. When you cut the number of steps between the food source and your plate, you maintain more of the food's vital energy. And, you're investing in your own community.

Q Do you have a personal go-to practice to get you through busy times?

A I start off every morning with daily affirmations and a gratitude list before I even open my eyes. For a long time, I used to travel almost weekly, and I would start the day feeling lost. I'd open one eye and think, "Where am I?" So now, regardless of where I am, before opening my eyes, I affirm who I am and what my life is about, connecting with what I'm grateful for and what's positive in my life. And I communicate that with every cell of my body. Words are powerful. Declaring what you are creates an impact on you, your body, and out into the world.

See page 47 for Leah's Home Practice sequence. »



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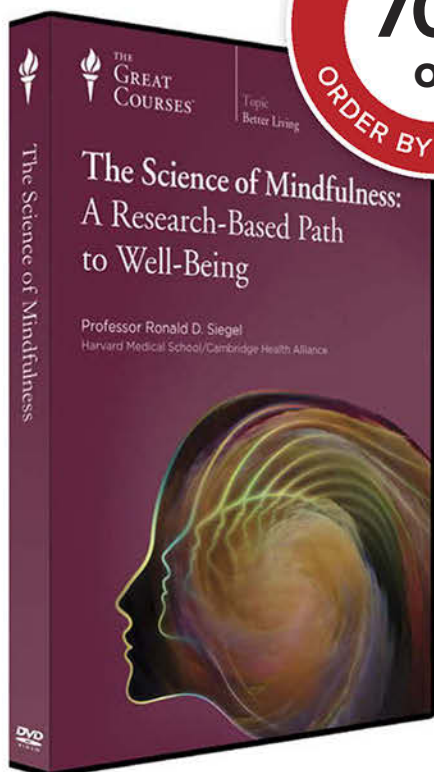


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10-, 20-, and 30-minute sequences to open up to joy

By Leah Cullis

If you have 10 minutes,
try this practice.



EMBRACE AND CELEBRATE the season by honoring the practices that create light and joy for you, and by sharing these gifts with others. This series of flowing sequences can help you do so by bringing you back to your center and igniting the energy you want to radiate. They emphasize hugging in to your body's centerline and focusing on your breath. Throughout, you'll also activate your core and shed stress with heat-building standing poses, twists, dynamic backbends, and deep hip openers.

Practice tips

Have a block handy. Move with your breath to awaken energy and focus. Cultivate Ujjayi Pranayama: Breathing slowly through your nose, slightly constrict the back of your throat so you feel the breath's texture. As you expand your breathing, set your intention for your practice. Create space for celebration and joy.

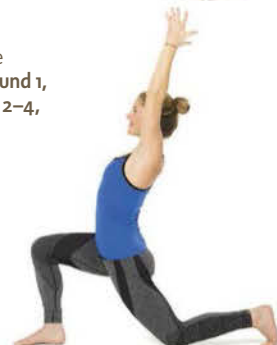
Instructions: Do 4 rounds of this sequence (a round is the sequence practiced on both the right and left sides). In **round 1**, hold each pose for 5–6 breaths, or 30 seconds. In **rounds 2–4**, hold each pose for 1 breath, or 5–6 seconds.



Adho Mukha Svanasana

Downward-Facing Dog Pose

Standing at the top of your mat, fold forward, plant your hands on the earth, and step your feet back into Downward Dog. Lift your hips high as you ground through your hands and firm your leg muscles to the bones. Pull your navel in and feel your abundant breath.



Anjaneyasana Low Lunge

From Down Dog, step your right foot forward to your right thumb. Lower your left knee to the earth, keeping your back toes tucked. Inhale and sweep both arms to the sky as you lift your chest and come into a gentle backbend.



Lightning Warrior

Reach your arms back along your sides and spread your fingers wide. Lift your back knee up and hover your chest at a 45-degree angle. Extend through your back heel and reach through the crown of the head to create a long line of energy. Hug your outer shins in toward your centerline and draw your low belly up and in.



High Crescent Lunge

Keep your legs in a deep lunge. Inhale as you sweep your arms up and lift your chest upright. Move fluidly with your breath. Lengthen the sides of your torso as you reach your arms higher. Lift your low belly and scissor your inner thighs in toward your centerline.



Crescent Twist

On an exhalation, bring your hands together in prayer position at your heart and twist your torso to the right. Hook your left tricep over your right thigh, pressing your arm into your leg to help you lengthen your spine and spin your heart up. Unwind, return to Downward Dog, and practice sequence on the left.

If you have 20 minutes, add these poses to your sequence.



Instructions: Do 4 rounds of this sequence. In **round 1**, hold each pose for 5–6 breaths, or 30 seconds. In **rounds 2–4**, hold each pose for 1 breath, or 5–6 seconds.



Virabhadrasana II Warrior Pose II

From Downward Dog, step your right foot forward to your right thumb, plant your back foot on the ground, and rise up to Warrior Pose II. Stretch your arms away from each other. Draw the tips of your shoulder blades together and broaden your chest. Look forward over your front hand. As you inhale, radiate out in all directions.



Three-Legged Dog, variation

Bring your hands to the mat and step back into Downward Dog. Inhale as you reach your right leg high behind you, lifting from your inner right thigh. Bend your right knee, bring your heel toward your glute, and open your right hip and side body. Keep your hands firmly planted and arms parallel.



Flip Dog

Press onto your left tiptoes and into your left hand as you spin your torso and hips open to the ceiling and lower your right foot to the floor. Lift your hips high. Keep your feet grounded and hip-distance apart. Squeeze the tips of your shoulders together to expand your chest, and reach your right arm behind you. Let your head drop, and take deep, expansive breaths.



Plank Pose

From Flip Dog, with your core engaged, spin your torso back toward the floor and place both hands on the mat. Root your palms to the earth and stack your shoulders over your wrists. Reach your heels back and your crown forward, lengthen your spine, and engage the low belly and legs.



Vasisthasana, variation

Side Plank Pose, variation

Shift weight into your right hand and stack your left foot on top of your right, flexing both feet. Stretch your left arm high. To express joy in the pose, lift your hips as high as you can and open your chest. Reach strongly through your heels and stretch your arms away from each other.



Wild Thing

From Side Plank, lift your left leg up a foot or two. Bend your left knee and float that foot to the floor, landing on the ball of the foot, as you soar your hips high. Press into the outer edge of the right foot and engage the right leg. Draw the head of your right humerus in and open your heart. Extend your top arm. Expand and celebrate! *Return to Downward Dog and practice sequence on the left.*

End here with Savasana, 3 minutes
OR, HAVE 10 MORE MINUTES? TURN TO PAGE 50 TO EXTEND YOUR SEQUENCE.

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Yoga teacher Kathryn Budig photographed by Jasper Johal

If you have 30 minutes, add these poses to your sequence.



Instructions: Do the first 4 poses on right, then repeat on left. Finish with the final 2 poses.

5–6 breaths,
30 seconds



Utthan Pristhasana
Lizard Pose

From Downward Dog, bring your thumbtips to touch at the center of your mat. Step your right foot to the outside of your right hand and lower your left knee down. After a few breaths, turn your right toes out, shift to the foot's outer edge, and let your right hip open. Lower to your forearms. If the stretch is too intense, stay lifted on your hands.

5–6 breaths,
30 seconds



Utthan Pristhasana, variation
Lizard Pose, variation

From Lizard, bend your left knee, reach your right arm back, and catch hold of your left foot. Draw that foot toward your glutes as you spin your chest open to the right. Squeeze your shoulder blades in to lift and open your heart space. Exhale and release your back leg, returning to Lizard Pose with straight arms.

10–12 breaths,
1 minute



Eka Pada Rajakapotasana, variation
Pigeon Pose, variation

Slide your right foot to your left wrist, shin parallel to the top of your mat. Square both hips, and straighten your arms to lift your heart for a few breaths. Walk your hands forward, lower to your forearms, and fold forward. Open with each inbreath; send out gratitude with each outbreath. To finish, walk your hands back and sit upright.

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10–12 breaths,
1 minute

Firelog Pose

Sweep your left leg around and stack your left shin on top of your right, feet flexed. Press your hands down by your hips and scoot your hips back a few inches. Lift your heart high as you inhale and broaden your chest. Ride your exhalation down as you fold forward. Rest your forearms on a block, or the floor. *Unwind, return to Downward Dog, and repeat the first four poses on the left.*



30–36 breaths,
3 minutes

Hip Opener

Come to all fours and rest on your forearms. Widen your knees as far apart as you can, with thighs perpendicular to your torso and knees bent at 90 degrees. Flex your feet. Stay lifted on your forearms, or stack your hands to create a pillow to rest your forehead on. Find a balance of effort and ease. Let yourself expand with joyous breath.



Breathe freely,
4 minutes

Savasana, variation

Corpse Pose, variation

Slide forward to your belly and gently roll over onto your back. Place a block under your sacrum to lengthen your tailbone and counter the sequence's deep hip opening. Let your feet fall out to the sides. Extend your arms along your body. Let go of Ujjayi breath and come back to breathing naturally. Relax and receive the gifts of your practice.

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A woman with brown hair tied back is performing a yoga pose against a dark, textured wall. She is wearing a black tank top and blue leggings. Her legs are bent, and she is holding her feet with her arms, looking upwards. The background is a dark, weathered wall with some rust and a small hole.





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credible BUSINESS

A new crowdfunded program called Credibles lets you invest in small, sustainable startup restaurants and artisanal food businesses simply by prepaying for edible “credits” that you use later like gift cards. The concept is similar to community-supported agriculture, except it’s much more flexible: You buy credits with the Credibles app, then redeem them for foods or dishes whenever you want, from any participating business. “Credibles is not just a tool to raise capital for us, but also an economic model that empowers our regional foodsheds in general,” says Kathryn Lukas, owner of Farmhouse Culture in Santa Cruz, California, a Credibles partner that sells organic kraut and kimchi. At press time, partners were in 37 cities and towns nationwide offering fresh breads, craft beer, coffee, sustainable seafood, and much more. Learn more about the program at credibles.org. LAUREN ARCURI

Beyond breakfast

Oats are fast becoming the healthy cook's anytime ingredient. By Kate Gammon

WITH EVIDENCE OF OATS' HEALTH BENEFITS growing, it's good news that the grain is showing up more and more in savory dinner dishes and snacks. Researchers have confirmed that eating unsweetened oats can improve glycemic control and reduce insulin sensitivity, making them helpful in preventing and managing diabetes, and that they can lower total cholesterol. And eating oats in the evening may be particularly helpful for controlling next-day hunger: A study conducted at Hebrew University in Israel suggests eating carbs at night may lead to healthy daytime levels of the hormones that regulate appetite and feelings of fullness—so a helping of oats at dinner may mean you're not aching for a snack during tomorrow's Sun Salutation. For creative recipe ideas that break the morning-oatmeal mold, try these tips from food blogger Kathy Hester, adapted from her new book, *OATrageous Oatmeals*.

Soup

Get a creamy texture without the dairy in pureed soups like **butternut squash** or **potato-leek** by adding $\frac{1}{2}$ cup **regular rolled oats** with your liquid. Cook 10–20 minutes, and then blend. For a chunky soup, such as **chicken and vegetable**, throw in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup **steel-cut oats** in place of barley or rice.

Risotto

Replace rice with **steel-cut oats** for a nourishing dinner. As with a typical risotto recipe, gradually add liquid to oats, over heat, until just cooked but not mushy. Flavor with plenty of fresh herbs, sundried tomatoes, or mushrooms, or a dash of nutritional yeast to balance out oats' natural sweetness.

Pizza topping

Chewy steel-cut oats make delicious meat-free "sausage" crumbles. Cook $\frac{1}{2}$ cup **steel-cut oats** in 1 cup water, covered, 10 minutes. Uncover and cook off remaining liquid, 5 minutes. Mix in **Italian seasonings** and **garlic powder**, press onto a cookie sheet, and bake at 350°F, 10 minutes. Cool and crumble.

Late-night snack

Make a sugar-free granola snack to enjoy solo or with yogurt. Mix 1 cup **rolled oats** with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup each **shredded coconut**, **minced cashews**, and **golden raisins**, 2 tbsp **ground flaxseeds**, 2 tsp **curry spice mix**, a pinch of **salt**, and 3 tbsp **vegetable oil**. Spread mixture on a cookie sheet and bake at 350°F until lightly browned, 20 minutes.

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eat well NOURISH

FOR GLUTEN-FREE BAKING

FLOURS Most grocery stores now carry at least a few gluten-free flour blends. They typically contain four kinds of flours, including starches like potato or tapioca to help bind and tenderize. If you are trying to go low-carb, seek out nut- or bean-based blends, which are generally higher in protein, fiber, and other nutrients; use them in recipes with chocolate, spices, or other strong flavors that mask the flour's slight beany notes. For lightly flavored cakes, such as angel food, choose a mild-flavored blend with white-rice flour at the top of the ingredients list. Single flours like almond, coconut, or quinoa work well, too, but be sure to add a binder.

BINDERS When baking without wheat, you need to add a binding ingredient to re-create the gluten-based structure that forms when the wheat flour is mixed with liquid and which serves to hold together ingredients. Otherwise your goodie will fall flat or crumble. Replace 1/4 cup of liquid with one egg. For a vegan alternative, mix 1 tablespoon ground flax with 1/4 cup water in place of one egg. Or try xanthan or guar gum, powdered binding ingredients sold at health food stores. For bread, use 1 teaspoon of gum per cup of flour; for cakes and cookies, just half a teaspoon—any more and they will turn out rubbery.

PANTRY STAPLES Gluten-free flour blend, eggs or flax seeds, xanthan and guar gums

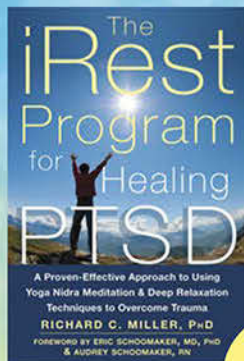
FOR LOW-SUGAR BAKING

WHOLE-FRUIT PUREES Most sugar-abstainers are ditching refined sweeteners like table sugar and high-fructose corn syrup, but some even avoid unprocessed simple sugars like honey and maple syrup. Luckily, it's possible to bake sweets without most of these by substituting in a whole-fruit puree, which also adds antioxidants, fiber, and other nutrients to the dessert. To make, soak dates, prunes, or other dried fruit for a few hours or overnight, drain, and puree in a food processor or blender. Replace up to half the fats and sugar with an equivalent amount of puree. (You'll need to experiment to get the proportions just right.) Use purees in fruit-based recipes, such as blueberry muffins or fruitcake, or in chocolate desserts, which harmonize well with fruit flavor.

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vegan maple-pecan pie

SERVES 12

Cashew cream combined with a hint of apple and cinnamon creates a luscious filling perfect for the holidays. A maple-pecan topping adds a sweet crunch.

- 3 tbsp refined coconut oil,
plus extra for greasing
- 8 oz graham crackers
- 1 cup maple syrup, divided
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 2 ½ cups raw cashews, soaked
overnight and drained
- 1 cup unsweetened vanilla
almond milk
- ¾ cup raw cane sugar
- ½ cup unsweetened
applesauce
- 3 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp arrowroot
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 ½ cups pecan halves

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease a 10-inch springform pan with oil. In a food processor, grind crackers to fine crumbs. Drizzle in ¼ cup syrup and oil; add cinnamon, and process to mix. Sprinkle crumb mixture into pan. With damp fingers, press it firmly into pan, leaving slightly thicker edges. Bake, 10 minutes. Let cool.

In a food processor, grind cashews until they form a thick paste. Gradually add almond milk, processing until smooth and creamy. Add sugar, applesauce, lemon juice, arrowroot, vanilla, and a pinch of salt, and process to mix. Spoon cashew mixture into crust, spreading it smoothly. Bake, 30 minutes.

In a saucepan, bring remaining ¾ cup syrup to a boil. Reduce heat. Simmer, stirring frequently, 5 minutes. Arrange pecans on top of pie in concentric circles to cover the surface. Drizzle syrup neatly over nuts.

Bake until pie is slightly puffed and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 20 minutes. Let cool on a rack, then refrigerate to chill. Serve cold.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 465 calories per serving, 25 g fat (6 g saturated), 56 g carbs, 3 g fiber, 7 g protein, 161 mg sodium

dairy-free double chocolate chunk cookies

MAKES 14 COOKIES

Plentiful dark-chocolate chunks and vegetable oil make these chewy cookies rich and satisfying. No milk chocolate or butter necessary.

- ½ oz unsweetened baking chocolate
- 2 tbsp olive or canola oil
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ½ cup unbleached flour
- ¼ cup whole-wheat pastry flour
- ¾ cup light brown sugar
- ¼ cup cocoa
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- ¾ cup sweetened dark-chocolate chunks

Heat oven to 350°F. In a double boiler over medium heat, combine baking chocolate and oil. Heat, stirring, until chocolate melts and mixture is smooth. Let cool to room temperature. Whisk in egg and vanilla.

In a bowl, whisk together flours, brown sugar, cocoa, baking soda, and salt. Stir in the chocolate mixture. It will be stiff, so use your hands to knead it all together. Mix in the chocolate chunks.

Divide dough into 14 pieces and roll into balls. Place 3 inches apart on 2 parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Dampen hands with water and gently flatten the balls to ¾-inch thick.

Bake cookies for 5 minutes. Reverse the position of the baking sheets and bake until cookies are slightly puffed and darker around the edges, 5 minutes.

Cool on sheets, 5 minutes. Transfer to racks to cool completely.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 141 calories per serving, 7 g fat (3 g saturated), 21 g carbs, 2 g fiber, 2 g protein, 137 mg sodium



For folks looking to avoid even fruit, stevia is a plant-based sweetener that doesn't impact blood glucose levels. One teaspoon of stevia powder replaces a cup of sugar. To replace bulk, add 1/4 to 1/2 cup pumpkin puree or other moist puree.

PANTRY STAPLES Apple juice, applesauce, dates or other dried fruit, stevia powder

FOR NON-DAIRY BAKING

VEGETABLE OILS Replace butter with liquid plant-based oil rather than using margarine, which contains processed or partially hydrogenated oils. It's an easy swap in buttery cookie recipes: just use 10 tbsp oil for each cup of butter. Choose a heart-healthy option like extra-virgin olive oil (rest assured, the grassy flavor bakes off), or walnut or canola oil. For flaky results in pastries, such as pie crusts, scones, or biscuits, chill the oil first and drizzle it into the flour slowly, then quickly add any remaining liquid and shape the pastry. Or replace butter in pastries with equal parts chilled and solidified coconut oil. To use, simply grate oil into flakes and toss with the flour. Try raw-nut purees or nut butters to add richness in baked goods: Replace half the

fats with peanut or almond butter in granola bars, cookies, or cakes.

CREAMINESS Replace milk or cream with nondairy milks; almond and coconut are the most neutral tasting and have good body for baking fluffy cakes and muffins. Higher-fat canned coconut milk is more like cream, great for ganache or ice cream. To make "whipped cream," chill a can of coconut milk overnight. Pour off watery liquid and scoop solid cream into a chilled bowl. Add 1–2 tbsp confectioner's sugar and whip until fluffy. Chill until ready to serve. For a stand-in for cream cheese or sour cream, make cashew cream. Soak 2 cups raw cashews overnight, drain, then puree in a food processor, adding water gradually until creamy. This yields 2 1/2 cups thick or 3 1/2 cups "pourable" cashew cream. Sweeten to taste with agave or maple syrup.

PANTRY STAPLES Olive or canola oil, nondairy milk, canned coconut milk

FOR VEGAN BAKING

ANIMAL-FRIENDLY SWEETENERS Strict vegans often avoid white sugar because it is filtered through cow-bone charcoal. However, raw

sugars are not filtered that way and are considered vegan, and vegan sugars like Wholesome Sweeteners and Florida Crystals are also available. Instead of honey, which vegans leave to the bees, you can use agave, maple syrup, or a fruit-based honey replacement like Bee Free Honee.

REPLACING EGGS To bake without eggs, you need to replace the binding power of egg whites. Use binders made from ground flax or starches, such as arrowroot, potato starch, or tapioca. To replace 1 egg, whisk 1 tbsp of finely ground flax seed with 1/4 cup water. Or whisk together 1 tsp arrowroot, 1/2 tsp baking powder, 1/4 tsp guar gum, and 3 tbsp water. A store-bought egg replacer powder, such as Ener-G brand, combines a few starches with some leavening. For moisture and body, use purees of banana, pumpkin, or tofu. Silken-tofu puree is great in cheesecakes, and can replace half the fat in cookies and muffins.

PANTRY STAPLES Vegan sugar, ground flax seeds, maple syrup, egg replacer, pumpkin puree, silken tofu, raw cashews

Robin Asbell is a chef and author of six cookbooks, including *Sweet & Easy Vegan*.

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gluten-free cranberry upside-down cake

SERVES 10

In this luscious dessert, tangy cranberries are encased in just enough buttery cake, and a blend of spices and orange zest adds exciting flavor.

- 8 tbsp unsalted butter, divided
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 2 cups cranberries, thawed if frozen
- 1 ½ cups gluten-free flour
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp ground cloves
- ½ tsp baking soda

- ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp xanthan gum
- ½ cup sugar
- 3 large eggs
- Zest of 1 orange
- ½ cup buttermilk
- 1 tsp vanilla

Heat oven to 350°F. In 11-inch round spring-form pan, melt 4 tbsp butter in oven, 5 minutes. Remove pan; sprinkle brown sugar evenly in it and top with cranberries.

In a bowl, combine flour, cinnamon, ginger, baking powder, cloves, soda, salt, and xanthan gum. In a stand mixer, cream remaining 4 tbsp butter. Beat in sugar, stopping to scrape down sides as

needed, until fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time. Set mixer on low; add flour mixture and zest, and process to mix. Scrape sides. Slowly mix in buttermilk and vanilla until smooth. Set mixer to high and beat, 2 minutes. Drop spoonfuls of batter evenly over cranberries; gently spread to cover the berries.

Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out with moist crumbs, about 40 minutes. Let cool in pan on a rack, 5 minutes. Place a plate over the cake and, holding firmly, flip to invert the cake onto the plate. Let cool.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 307 calories per serving, 12 g fat (6 g saturated), 49 g carbs, 3 g fiber, 4 g protein, 219 mg sodium

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date-sweetened pumpkin tartlets

MAKES 6 TARTLETS

Naturally sweet pumpkin and dates provide ample sweetness without added sugar. For an even sweeter flavor, roast and puree a whole pumpkin or kabocha squash instead of using canned pumpkin.

- 1 cup whole-wheat pastry flour,
plus extra for dusting
- ½ cup unbleached flour
- ½ tsp salt
- 3 tbsp canola or olive oil
- 6 tbsp apple juice, chilled, divided
- ½ cup moist dates
- 1 cup pumpkin puree
- 2 oz chevre cheese (half a 4 oz log)
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground ginger

- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- 6 tbsp fruit juice-sweetened
dried cranberries

Heat oven to 400°F. In a bowl, combine the flours and salt. Using a fork, toss flour mixture while drizzling in oil. Stir in 5 tbsp apple juice. Mix gently with your hands to form a stiff dough that holds together when pressed, adding remaining 1 tbsp of juice if necessary. Divide dough into 6 pieces and form into disks. Lightly flour a work surface and roll out disks to 5-inch rounds. Transfer rounds to 2 parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Cover with plastic wrap and chill, 1 hour or overnight.

In a food processor, puree dates, pausing to scrape down sides and repeating until smooth. Add pumpkin and process until

smooth. Add chevre, egg, and spices, and season with salt; process to mix.

To assemble, spread ¼ cup pumpkin mixture onto each dough round, leaving bare a 1-inch border. Fold border over the pumpkin filling in 4 quadrants, creating a rustic tartlet. Sprinkle 1 tbsp cranberries on the exposed filling of each tartlet and press into filling.

Bake until filling is puffed and crusts are golden brown, 30 minutes. Cool on sheets, 5 minutes; transfer to a cooling rack.

CHEF'S NOTE Moist, whole dates will puree easily and add moisture. If your dates are dry, soak them for an hour and drain before using.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 269 calories per serving, 11 g fat (2 g saturated), 40 g carbs, 4 g fiber, 6 g protein, 251 mg sodium

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WHEN DAYS BECOME SHORTER and colder, most mammals hunker down, hibernating or just physically moving more slowly through the winter. Not humans. For us, life only gets more frenetic when temperatures drop and the holiday season arrives. While the challenges that naturally arise in an active life can build strength, resilience, and confidence, a critical ingredient to that growth is easy to forget in our hyperproductive culture: recovery time.

“You need to rest, to put it simply,” says the California-based Iyengar instructor, restorative yoga teacher, and sleep researcher Roger Cole. “It allows you to recover fully from all the stresses and strains of life,” he explains—by relaxing muscles, lowering your heart rate, and allowing your nervous system to stop constantly reacting. “People come away from a restorative yoga class not only more relaxed but also more focused and effective,” he says.

Restorative postures, which are often supported by blocks, blankets, bolsters, and other props, are designed to maximize comfort and allow practitioners to fully let go, which is why

A restorative yoga practice
can help you rest, reflect,
and refresh.

The Winter of our

they are typically held longer—about 5 to 20 minutes. They are also arranged with the head below or near the same level as the heart, which helps to stimulate reflexes that quiet the brain and heart. To many frazzled Western yogis, minimizing effort can feel counterintuitive, but there are real benefits to what may seem like doing very little.

Yoga has long been shown to decrease the stress hormone cortisol, which, in elevated levels, is associated with weight gain, high blood pressure, and heart disease. And a few small studies on restorative practices specifically have shown that it can do the same, and may also help cancer patients fight depression and fatigue. Teachers of the practice witness even deeper benefits from slowing down. For example, Cole’s students often report better sleep for as many as three nights after a class. “Restorative yoga and sleep complement one another,” he says.

Restorative yoga is in fact better than sleep for releasing tense muscles, relieving joint aches, and transitioning the mind and body quickly from stress to calm, says Cole. He continues: “It also teaches conscious control of relaxation. Sleep is essential for completing the job of full recovery of the nervous system, sorting



Content

INTRODUCTION BY KATE SIBER
SEQUENCE BY GAIL GROSSMAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CARY JOBE



Practice this 60-minute restorative sequence as often as you can this busy holiday season. Or if time is limited, you can reap the rewards by indulging just once a week. Find a quiet, dark space, set up your props (if you don't have traditional blocks and bolsters, use books and pillows), and settle into poses that will help you rest, digest, and ultimately recharge. Restorative yoga is a receptive practice, so you'll feel open afterward, interacting with yourself and others in a more loving way.

1 SIDDHASANA

(Adept's Pose)

Sit in a comfortable cross-legged position. If your knees are higher than your hips, prop yourself up on a blanket or two. Rest your palms on your knees, and on an inhalation, lengthen the spine, reaching up through the crown of your head. Close your eyes and draw your attention inward, practicing *Apā Japa*, or breath awareness. Try not to change the way you are breathing; instead, follow a natural rhythm. Focus on the length of the inhalations and exhalations. Notice the breath coming in through the nostrils and into your lungs. Feel the expansion and contraction of your ribs as you breathe in and out. This will help you feel present in your body and life, and grounded and connected to your center during this chaotic time of year.

Sit here and breathe for at least 2 minutes.

out memories and emotions, and literally finding meaning in our lives.” In addition to an immediate calming effect, some of Cole’s regular restorative practitioners also notice improved powers of attention and concentration. But the most powerful benefits may be harder to measure.

“When the body is deeply relaxed and the nervous system is balanced, the mind is able to engage in our direct experience,” says Bo Forbes, a Boston-based therapeutic yoga teacher, psychologist, and the author of *Yoga for Emotional Balance*. “Over time, this body-based mindfulness helps us to gain a better perspective on our challenging interactions.”

Recovery has always been built into yoga through postures like Savasana, but B.K.S. Iyengar, a father of the modern practice, was the first to systematically develop restorative sequences, which he designed to help people struggling with injury, illness, and overwork. Now you can find restorative classes on most studio schedules.

Gail Grossman, owner of Om Sweet Om Yoga in Port Washington, New York, and the author of the new book *Restorative Yoga for Life*, says, “I tell people that in some ways, this is the hardest class you’re going to take. When you’re still, it’s hard to shut off your mind, and that’s where the real work is. That’s also where you might find the greatest capacity for growth, deep relaxation, and true well-being.” Grossman developed the following sequence exclusively for *Yoga Journal*, and recommends practicing restorative yoga at least once a week to see lasting benefits. Allow enough time to experiment with positioning, and try to let go—at least temporarily—of the need to strive.



2 SALAMBA BALASANA

(Supported Child’s Pose)



- 1 Position a bolster on an incline—supported by a block in the middle, on its widest side, and a block at the top, on its long edge.
- 2 Sit with your knees on either side of the low end of the bolster, resting on your heels. If you have tight feet, place a rolled-up blanket under the tops of your feet.
- 3 Fold forward and rest your entire belly on the bolster, so you can fully relax. Use blankets under your forearms for support. Turn your head to one side, and then after a few minutes, turn your head to the other side.

Stay in the posture for at least 5 minutes total.

- 4 When you are finished, sit up, move the bolster to the side, and bring your legs out to stretch.

This pose gently massages the abdominal organs. This can get things moving with your digestion, which may back up this time of year, when we tend not to eat as well as usual.

4 SUPPORTED BELLY-DOWN TWIST

1 From a seated position, place the bolster along the middle of your mat. You may choose to put the bolster on a gentle incline using blocks.

2 Bring the right hip next to the bolster, knees bent.

3 Stretch your right arm along the bolster and then lower your arm to the floor next to your bolster. Place your left hand on the floor along the other side of the bolster and turn your belly toward the bolster.

4 Lower yourself onto the bolster. Turn your head either toward your knees, or for a deeper twist, away from them. Let the bolster support you: Relax your arms and try not to hold yourself up. If you need to, place blankets under your forearms for support, and a blanket or block between your knees to take any strain off the back.

Hold this position for at least 3 minutes.

5 Come out by pressing yourself away from the bolster and sitting up. Repeat on the other side.

This twist helps to relieve stress and tension in the muscles along the sides and midsection of the torso, and it's great for helping you digest big holiday meals. Holding a twist for a long time in a relaxed state helps move things along, including blood flow to the stomach.



3 SALAMBA SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA

(Supported Reclining Bound Angle Pose)

1 Set up another reclining bolster, but make it at a steeper incline than the one you used for Supported Child's Pose.

2 Sit on the floor and bring your lower back to the low edge of the bolster. Take another bolster and place it horizontally under your knees.

3 Place your hands on the bolster behind you, puff up your chest, and then lie back on the bolster.

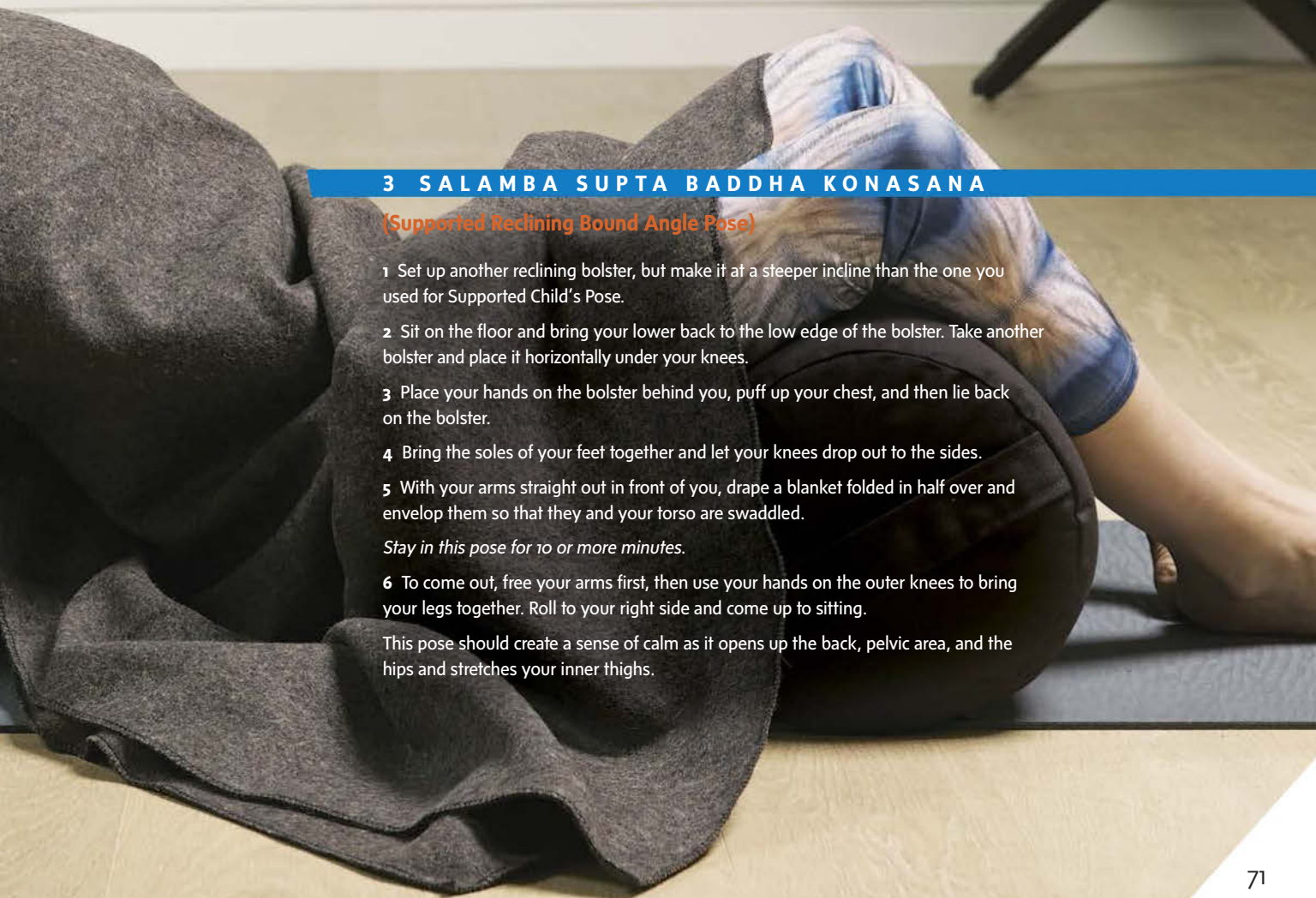
4 Bring the soles of your feet together and let your knees drop out to the sides.

5 With your arms straight out in front of you, drape a blanket folded in half over and envelop them so that they and your torso are swaddled.

Stay in this pose for 10 or more minutes.

6 To come out, free your arms first, then use your hands on the outer knees to bring your legs together. Roll to your right side and come up to sitting.

This pose should create a sense of calm as it opens up the back, pelvic area, and the hips and stretches your inner thighs.



5 VIPARITA KARANI

(Legs-up-the-Wall Pose)

- 1 Place a bolster on its flat side several inches from a wall.
- 2 Sit on the floor facing the wall, with one hip against one bolster end.
- 3 Lower your shoulders and head to the floor, lying on your side.
- 4 Then roll onto your back and up onto the bolster, eventually stretching your legs up the wall.
- 5 Adjust your position by scooting your tailbone toward the wall until it drops over the edge of the bolster.
- 6 Find a comfortable position for your arms, making sure they aren't touching anything but the floor. Settle into the pose and breathe.

Hold this pose for at least 10 minutes.

- 7 To come out, bend your knees, push yourself off the bolster, and roll to your right side before pushing back up to seated.

This pose is great for reinvigorating tired legs and feet. Like many inversions, it also has a calming effect on the nervous system, by giving the heart a rest. And it's great for staying balanced while traveling because it helps circulate blood after you've been sitting.



MODEL: AMANDA RUSSCOLI; STYLIST: EMILY CHOI; HAIR/MAKEUP: BETH WALKER; TOP (BRA): KORAL ACTIVEWEAR; TOP (TANK): ATHLETA; BOTTOMS: BOLSTERS: BAREFOOT YOGA CO.; BLOCK: BAREFOOT YOGA CO.; BLANKET: HUGGER WUGGER; MAT: MANDUKA



6 LEGS ON A CHAIR POSE

- 1 Place a chair on your yoga mat, with a folded blanket on the seat.
- 2 Set up two bolsters in a T shape, positioning the one closest to the chair horizontally.
- 3 Sit on the bolster closest to the chair and lie to one side before rolling onto your back and resting your spine on the vertical bolster.
- 4 Support your head with a blanket, if that feels good.
- 5 Lift your calves onto the seat of the chair and place your arms alongside you, making sure they're not touching anything but the floor. Settle in and connect to your breath.

Hold this position for at least 10 minutes.

- 6 To come out, hug your knees to your chest and roll to your right side.

Like Legs-up-the-Wall, this pose also provides the benefits of an inversion—including a calmed nervous system, restored legs and feet, and a relaxed lower back.



7 SIDE-LYING SAVASANA

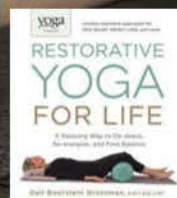
(Side-Lying Corpse Pose)

- 1 Lie down on your right side with a folded blanket under your head.
- 2 Bring your right arm out away from you.
- 3 Place one bolster between your legs, from mid thigh or knee to your ankle. Place another bolster in front of your belly, so that your top arm can drape over it.
- 4 If your knees and ankles aren't on the same plane, put a folded blanket under your calves and ankles to elevate them.

To get the true benefits of the pose, hold it for 10 to 20 minutes.

Side-Lying Savasana is especially effective at relieving fatigue. If you're pregnant or need help with digestion, lie on the left, to avoid compressing the vena cava vein, which moves blood from the lower part of the body—the uterus—to the heart, and to encourage the natural flow of waste through the intestines. **YJ**

OUR PROS Teacher **Gail Grossman** is the founder and director of Om Sweet Om Yoga in Port Washington, New York, and has been teaching yoga since 2000. Model **Amanda Russcol** has been teaching yoga for about a decade and runs her own studio, Yoga High, in Denver. Writer **Kate Siber** is a freelance health, travel, and environmental journalist based in Durango, Colorado.



For more on restorative yoga, including additional calming poses and sequences, read Grossman's new book, *Restorative Yoga for Life*, presented by *Yoga Journal* (Adams Media, 2014).



healthy
HARVEST



This year, serve up an Ayurvedic holiday feast that will leave everyone feeling well-fed in body and soul.

STORY BY HILLARI DOWDLE

RECIPES BY JEREMY ROCK SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY REBECCA STUMPF



THE HOLIDAY TABLE, surrounded by friends and family, is a home chef's moment to shine. And with a properly balanced menu, inspired by Ayurveda's healing principles, you can truly satisfy everyone in every sense. As Erin Casperson, coordinator of Ayurvedic studies at Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, explains, chilly, windy winter weather has a drying effect on skin, digestion, and sinuses. Ayurvedic cooking counters that by emphasizing warm, hydrating broths and rich sauces. So yes, that means your holiday meal can be a little indulgent. And, if it's well balanced with spices (which support digestion), a full range of flavors, and nutrient-rich seasonal produce, it will be just what the Ayurvedic doctor ordered.

"In the West, we are acculturated to do one thing: eat a low-fat diet. But that's not healthy in the winter," says Tom Yarema, MD, director of the Center for Wellness & Integrative Medicine in Santa Cruz, California, and author of the Ayurvedic cookbook *Eat, Taste, Heal*. "Instead, you want to eat more foods that are unctuous—warm and juicy, with a little more oil than you might eat in other seasons." Eating this way, he explains, will help keep your mucous membranes moist and less susceptible to cold season.

What you eat should also always be guided by an understanding of your own predominant *dosha*, or natural energy type, Dr. Yarema explains. The doshas influence our bodies and personalities. *Vata*, the dosha that dominates in late fall and early winter, is cool, dry, and irregular (think of creative, scattered types), and it's balanced by pungent spices, healthy fats, and cooked grains. *Pitta*, on full display in summer, is hot and fiery (driven type-As). Pittas need to cool down—so less chili or other hot spices, and more bitter- and sweet-flavored foods like whole grains and root veggies. *Kapha*, which governs later winter and early spring, is earthy, cold, and moist (think earth-mother types). Kaphas need spices, too—and astringent tastes (lots of greens), but minimal oil. (If you don't know your dosha, take our quiz at yogajournal.com/doshaquiz.)

No matter your dosha, the holiday meal offered on the pages that follow, created by Kripalu's executive chef, Jeremy Rock Smith, will support it. The meal is designed to be balancing for all the doshas because it includes the six tastes recognized in Ayurveda—sweet, sour, salty, bitter, astringent, and pungent—all of which are required to make a meal truly satisfying and nourishing. The dishes also align with another Ayurvedic principle: the idea that nature provides us with what we need when we need it, so eating locally and seasonally will keep you healthy all year. (This menu is local to Kripalu, so swap in similar local produce where you can.)

But, the most important ingredient in a feast? Pleasure. "I can add this spice or that ingredient because it's good for you, but if you don't enjoy the taste, it's not Ayurvedic," says Rock Smith. "This meal is balanced, and it's designed to lead to physical and emotional enjoyment."

Hillari Dowdle is a writer and editor living in Knoxville, Tennessee.



***Turmeric** has powerful anti-inflammatory effects, and is being studied as a treatment for diseases like cancer, Alzheimer's, and osteoarthritis.*



*Among **chai spices**, cinnamon may regulate blood sugar and protect heart health; black pepper improves intestinal health; and cardamom contains cancer-fighting compounds.*



***Ginger** is high in anti-inflammatory compounds, which may help reduce arthritic pain. And, it's an excellent remedy for nausea and motion sickness, perfect for a season filled with overindulgence and travel.*

the 6 flavors of life

Ayurveda teaches that we need to eat a balance of six basic flavors to be well-nourished and emotionally contented, explains Ayurvedic expert Niika Quistgard. "Each taste is associated with a particular emotion, and when you have them all in balance, you feed not only your physical but your emotional self, too," she says. So when you're planning a meal for a group, keep all the following flavors present, and you may discover your guests' moods interplay for an interesting and memorable dinner party.

Astringency can lead to a bracing feeling

Bitterness can bring an inward-looking, reflective mood

Pungency might make you feel "fired up"

Saltiness can result in a feeling of zest for life

Sourness leads to a sharpened mind and increased desire

Sweetness may give feelings of love and well-being

warm kale, apple, & roasted root vegetables with turmeric vinaigrette

SERVES 8

A zesty vinaigrette and tart green apples complement sweet root veggies and bitter kale. It's balancing for kaphas and pitas, but vatas should eat this moderately.

- 1 cup apple cider
- 2 tbsp apple-cider vinegar
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp turmeric
- ½ tsp sea salt
- 4 tbsp olive oil, divided
- 1 ½ cups parsnips, turnips, and sweet potatoes, diced in ½-inch chunks
- 8 cups Lacinata kale, de-stemmed, cut in ¼-inch ribbons
- ½ cup green apple, medium-diced

In a small saucepan over high heat, combine cider, vinegar, and spices. Bring to a boil. Remove vinaigrette from heat immediately and let cool.

Heat oven to 350°F. On the range, heat a large oven-safe sauté pan over medium heat. Add 2 tbsp olive oil and root vegetables; sauté until lightly browned. Transfer pan to oven and roast until tender, 10 minutes. Remove vegetables. Add remaining 2 tbsp oil, kale, and apples to still-hot pan. Cook on medium heat until kale begins to wilt, 3 minutes.

Add root vegetables and vinaigrette to pan. Cook, stirring until kale is tender and vinaigrette is reduced by half, 5 minutes. Season with salt and black pepper.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 128 calories per serving, 7 g fat (4 g saturated), 16 g carbs, 3 g fiber, 3 g protein, 159 mg sodium

gingery pumpkin bisque with maple syrup

SERVES 8

This sweet and spicy soup made with flavor-rich roasted pumpkin, ginger, and maple syrup is good for vatas and pitas; kaphas should eat in moderation.

- 4 cups pumpkin, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 4 tbsp olive oil, divided
- ½ cup diced onion, divided
- 2 tbsp fresh ginger, minced
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground allspice
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- 1 tsp apple-cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp maple syrup

Heat oven to 350°F. In a roasting pan, toss pumpkin in 2 tbsp olive oil. Roast until tender, 12–15 minutes.

In a saucepan over low heat, heat 1 tbsp olive oil. Add onions and cook, covered, until translucent, 4 minutes. Add cooked pumpkin, reserving a few pieces for garnish. Increase heat to medium; add remaining 1 tbsp oil and spices and cook, stirring, until fragrant, 20 seconds. Add stock and simmer, 10 minutes. Remove from heat.

Add cider vinegar and season with salt and black pepper. Transfer to a food processor and puree until smooth.

Ladle into 8 bowls. Garnish each bowl with roasted pumpkin pieces and drizzle with maple syrup.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 101 calories per serving, 7 g fat (1 g saturated), 10 g carbs, 1 g fiber, 1 g protein, 72 mg sodium

spicy hot chai

SERVES 8

The ultimate soul-drink, warm and creamy chai is good in moderation for all the doshas in winter. It combines the sweetness of dairy with pungent spices and the bitter flavor of black tea. If you avoid caffeine, try replacing the black tea with rooibos.

- 4 tbsp whole cardamom
- 4 tsp whole cloves
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 2 stars of anise
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- 2 tbsp fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced
- 4 cups whole or almond milk
- 8 bags black tea

Combine first six ingredients in a square of cheesecloth, tied. Lightly pound with a rolling pin to crush spices slightly.

In a large pot over high heat, combine milk, 4 cups water, and spice bundle and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, 15 minutes.

Increase heat to high to bring milk mixture back to a boil; remove from heat immediately. Add tea bags and let steep, 5 minutes. Strain, and sweeten to taste with honey or raw sugar if desired.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 77 calories per serving, 4 g fat (2 g saturated), 7 g carbs, 0 g fiber, 4 g protein, 60 mg sodium

Chai recipe courtesy of the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health.

whipped potatoes

SERVES 8

A classic holiday dish gets new flavor from the nutty richness of ghee, or clarified butter, an Ayurvedic staple. This mild dairy-based dish is best for balancing out pitta types. Vatas and kaphas can enjoy in moderation.

- 1 lb Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and quartered
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup whole milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup ghee
- 1 tsp salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp black pepper

Heat a large stockpot filled halfway with salted water over high heat. Add potatoes and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer until fork-tender, 15 minutes. Drain and set aside in a bowl.

In the same pot over low heat, combine remaining ingredients. Bring to a simmer and immediately remove from heat. Add potatoes and mash until almost smooth, but still slightly chunky.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 122 calories per serving, 8 g fat (5 g saturated), 11 g carbs, 1 g fiber, 2 g protein, 339 mg sodium

seared tofu cutlets or chicken breasts over wild mushrooms, with creamy sage and green-peppercorn sauce

SERVES 8

A balance of mild, astringent, and spicy flavors makes this dish good for vata and pitta types, while kaphas should eat it moderately. Seared tofu or organic, free-range chicken benefits all doshas in winter.

- 6 tbsp unsalted butter, divided
- 4 tbsp minced shallots
- 4 cups each shiitake, crimini, and portobello mushrooms, diced
- 1 cup white wine

- 4 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 lbs extra-firm tofu, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch slices, or 8 organic, free-range, boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- 2 tbsp ghee
- 1 tsp garlic
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 2 tsp green peppercorns
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp chopped fresh sage
- 4 tbsp minced sweet red peppers

In a small saucepot over low heat, melt 4 tbsp butter. Add shallots, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent, 5 minutes. Add mushrooms; cover and cook until they release all juices, 10 minutes. Uncover; increase heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until juices are reduced, 4 minutes.

Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white wine; stir to loosen dry bits from the bottom of the pan. Cook, reducing liquid, until dry. Remove from heat, season with salt and black pepper, and add parsley. Cover to keep warm.

Season tofu with salt. Heat an oven-safe sauté pan or cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Melt ghee. Add tofu; sear, flipping once, until golden brown, 2–3 minutes per side. (If using chicken, heat oven to 325°F. Melt ghee in oven-safe pan and sear breasts, flipping once, until golden brown, 1 minute per side. Transfer pan of chicken to oven and bake until internal temperature reaches 160°F, 8–10 minutes.)

In a saucepan over low heat, melt remaining 2 tbsp butter, add garlic, and cook, stirring, until fragrant, 20 seconds. Add remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup wine and reduce liquid until dry. Add cream and peppercorns and cook to thicken, until mixture coats a wooden spoon, 2–3 minutes. Stir in mustard and sage. Remove from heat. Season with salt and black pepper.

Serve tofu (or chicken) over mushrooms, topped with cream sauce and garnished with red peppers.

NUTRITIONAL INFO 509 calories per serving with tofu, 33 g fat (16 g saturated), 12 g carbs, 4 g fiber, 42 g protein, 203 mg sodium

roasted brussels sprouts with pickled red onions

SERVES 8

Pickled onions add a tangy note to earthy caramelized Brussels sprouts. The combination of bitter, pungent, and sour flavors makes this dish a top choice for kapha types. Pittas and vatas can also enjoy it in moderation.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white vinegar
- 1 cup thinly sliced red onion
- 4 cups halved Brussels sprouts
- 3 tbsp olive oil, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground black pepper


In a shallow bowl, mix sugar with vinegar until dissolved. Submerge onions in mixture and let stand for at least 45 minutes or overnight. Drain.

In a large pot over high heat, bring 6 cups of water to a boil. Add Brussels sprouts and cook until bright green and just tender, 4 minutes. Remove from heat, drain, and immediately dunk in a bowl of ice water. Pat dry.


In a large oven-safe sauté pan over medium heat, heat 1 tbsp oil. Add onions and sauté until translucent, 4 minutes; remove and set aside. Add remaining 2 tbsp oil to pan; sauté Brussels sprouts until edges start to brown, 5 minutes.

Heat oven to 350°F. Transfer pan to oven and roast until Brussels sprouts are caramelized, 8–10 minutes. Stir in onions, salt, and black pepper.


NUTRITIONAL INFO 73 calories per serving, 5 g fat (1 g saturated), 6 g carbs, 2 g fiber, 2 g protein, 157 mg sodium



Ghee from grass-fed cows contains phenolic antioxidants, which bolster the immune system.



Brussels sprouts top the list of cruciferous veggies (which include kale and cabbage) for levels of glucosinolates, cancer-fighting compounds. They're also high in vitamin K, key for bone health.



Crimini and shiitake mushrooms contain compounds that support the immune system, and shiitakes are also being studied for their cardiovascular benefits. The rosmarinic acid in sage can help reduce inflammation throughout the body.




De West practices
Trikonasana in
Boulder, Colorado.



get inspired

BY SALLY WADYKA



When a crisis hits, you have to dig deep. Yoga helps people tap into reserves of inner strength to find new hope, resilience, and happiness.

THERE ARE EXPERIENCES in life that call on you to find a strength you never thought you had. To have to bury your soulmate or beloved parent, to live in a body wracked with pain, to lose mobility and independence—these are trials that can elicit the hidden potential of the human spirit to fight on through suffering, and to keep faith with what is good, with light and love. For many who practice, yoga is the lifeline that connects us with that power within.

“When we practice yoga, we clear the space to begin to touch base with who we truly are, beneath the story, beneath the tragedy,” says Amy Weintraub, founding director of LifeForce Yoga Healing Institute and author of *Yoga for Depression*. “And that can infuse us with a sense of hope.”

Yoga’s philosophy teaches that all the levels of our body and mind are connected—the musculoskeletal, the breath, the emotional, mental, and spiritual. When you go through a crisis or tragedy, Weintraub explains, your muscles tighten and the breath can become chronically constricted. “The body remembers the places we’ve held trauma and loss, even if we think we’ve let it go,” Weintraub says.

Practicing yoga with attention to breath and sensation can release what’s constricting your physical body, letting you tap into—and work through—what’s happening on an emotional level, and giving you access to your true, blissful nature.

“No matter if your practice is gentle or vigorous, it can have a profound effect,” says Weintraub. “Yoga can calm an anxious state, elevate a depressed mood, and generally allow us to cope better with whatever life brings. And, as an act of self-care, it’s empowering.”

A growing body of research shows that yoga can measurably improve the lives of people who’ve experienced trauma. Researchers working with PTSD sufferers have shown that yoga can improve heart-rate variability (a measure of chronic stress and PTSD), emotional regulation, and pain.

The research is powerful evidence, but often, real-life stories are even more compelling. The six people whose stories are featured in these pages experienced some of life’s most grueling tribulations. Let their stories of resilience, courage, and healing inspire you to tackle your life’s challenges—both small and large—and live with hope and faith even when times are tough.

Joe Dailey

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Confined to a chair, he learned to feel alive in his body again.

In 2002, at age 38, Joe Dailey had his life take an irrevocable turn. A father of two teenage boys, competitive runner, and construction manager, he was in a near-fatal car accident that paralyzed him from the chest down. Joe spent a month in intensive care, the next nine months in rehab, and had to breathe through a tracheostomy tube for almost two and a half years after that. In rehab, he was taught to use his upper-body strength to maneuver in a wheelchair. The message he kept receiving: "Focus on your upper body, on what you have, and forget about the rest of your body."

But Joe had always loved being active, loved the physical thrill of playing basketball and of running—he'd competed in three full marathons and several half marathons. He mourned this loss of physical prowess, feeling a pang of grief when he'd see runners out on a sunny day. So in 2006, he went looking for an activity he could do despite being unable to move his legs. At a local rehab center, he found an adaptive yoga class taught by paraplegic Iyengar Yoga teacher Matt Sanford.

Joe was hooked on day one. Sanford directed the students to get on the floor, and four class assistants helped Joe get out of his chair and laid him on a mat. In the four years since his accident, Joe had lived his life suspended three feet in the air, in his chair or in bed.

"When I got on the floor, I felt connected again," he says. "I don't know any other way to describe it. The able-bodied walk on the earth every day, touching the ground. A person in a wheelchair is always hovering above it."

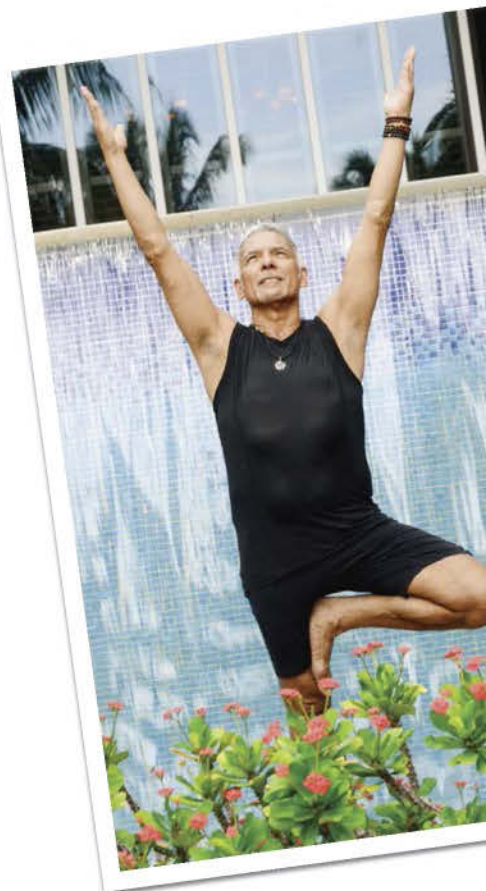
Joe started taking yoga weekly and began to regain a sense of whole-body awareness that he'd thought was lost to him forever. He learned how to do many yoga poses unassisted—twists, passive backbends, even modified Sun Salutations, which he does by pressing his hands into the back of a couch to stretch into versions of Downward Dog and Cobra. With help, he experiences many other poses, including sitting upright on the floor in Dandasana.

Sanford teaches his paralyzed patients using yoga cues similar to those you'd hear in any class, like: "Sit up tall and push down through your feet." When he initially heard this, Joe says, "My first thought was, 'I'm paralyzed from my chest down; I can't push through my feet. I don't know what this guy is smoking!'" But he tried, and inexplicably it worked. He experienced an awareness of pushing his feet down into the floor, or into his wheelchair foot pedals. And this awareness has been transformative, improving his balance and body confidence so much that he can now transfer himself from his chair to his bed without assistance, making him much more independent.

The sensation Joe most misses from his pre-accident life is that of crossing the finish line of a marathon: "You've run 26.5 miles and there's not a part of you you're not aware of. You're in this place where everything's quivering and alive and you can feel everything. After my accident, I thought I'd lost that feeling for good. But in yoga, I've found it again."



"When I got on the mat, I felt connected again."



Nick Montoya, above, wasn't planning to become a yoga teacher. Now, it's his life's purpose.

Claire Copersino

Long Island, New York

She lost a soulmate to cancer, but found new motivation to live her life fully.

Claire Copersino's first date with her late husband, Rocco, was at a yoga class in 1997. "Yoga quickly became an integral part of our relationship," she says. When they met, Rocco was in remission from Stage 3 Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and after his initial round of treatment, he was doing well and determined to embrace life. They married three years later, when Claire was 31, and opened a health food store in North Fork on Long Island in early 2000.

In March of that year, Claire was planning to attend a month-long teacher training at the Kripalu Center in Massachusetts. But right before she was scheduled to leave, Rocco's cancer came back and he started a new course of

Nick Montoya

Fort Myers, Florida

When stress nearly destroyed his health, his daughter gave him an ultimatum.

One morning five years ago, Nick Montoya, 56, woke up to leg and back pain so intense he could barely move. He'd been struggling with it for months, trying to contain it with painkillers, but this was different. The doctor told him he had damaged cartilage in two of his lumbar vertebrae and would likely need surgery. Two days later, Nick went to the hospital for an epidural treatment to alleviate the pain. On the way home, his daughter, who was driving, pulled the car over, turned off the ignition, and told him she wouldn't go any farther until he promised to go to a yoga class with her.

His daughter was right to be worried about him, Nick says. He never made time for self-care or exercise. He worked a high-pressure job as a manager at a technology firm, was coping with a messy divorce, raising three daughters, and helping run the local Hispanic Chamber of



"I could leave the world as it was and just breathe."

Commerce. He kept up his energy with caffeinated diet sodas—up to 10 a day. He was 50 pounds overweight. "I could see I couldn't keep it all together," Nick says. "It was scary."

Two weeks later, he went to a heated vinyasa yoga class. "As I was walking to the car after class, I realized my body felt better," he says. That was enough to convince him to go back for more classes, and he soon became a regular at his local studio in Sacramento, California, where he lived at the time. Yoga helped loosen his back and strengthen his core, relieving his pain. Best of all, it gave him resilience to cope with his overloaded life. "During that hour and a half in class, there was no focus other than the practice itself," he explains. "I could leave the world as it was and just breathe."

A few months later, Nick signed up for a 200-hour teacher training program, with no intention of becoming a teacher. By the end of three months of training, he'd lost the extra

weight, gotten off most of his medications, and just felt happier. Since then, he hasn't needed any more epidurals (let alone surgery) for his back.

Nick started teaching yoga on the side—just friends and family at first. A year after that first vinyasa class, he decided the money and prestige were no longer reason enough to continue his high-powered corporate job. He quit to focus on what truly mattered to him: helping people get healthy. He now brings yoga and wellness programs into big corporations like the one he left behind. And he keeps up his own practice: "Yoga is what's keeping me healthy so that I can be around for my daughters as long as possible," he says.

aggressive chemotherapy. "It was hard to leave, but he insisted that I continue to live my life," Claire says. She did the training, and as soon as she got back, Rocco helped her open a yoga studio in the space next to their store. They had two more precious years together before Rocco died in August of 2002.

Overnight, Claire's entire world changed. "He was everything to me," she says. That winter, she struggled to face life without her best friend and anchor. A new Ashtanga Yoga studio had opened nearby, and Claire threw herself into the rigorous practice. She'd arise daily at

5 a.m. to sweat through Sun Salutations, often after sleepless nights spent thinking about and missing her husband. "Yoga gave me a purpose, a reason to get up in the morning. It was a ritual, like going to church," she says. "No matter what, I'd say to myself each morning, 'OK, this is the starting point.'"

The demanding nature of the Ashtanga practice became a way for Claire to process her grief on a physical level—and saved her from sinking deep into despair. Every day she cried on the mat, releasing emotion. "There was a purifying quality to the practice," she says. "It allowed me to move the grief through my being, rather than getting stuck."

Step by step, Claire gradually rebuilt her life. She returned to teaching with support from her yoga community. People she barely knew outside the studio would show up with food, gifts, or simply to offer their company. "There was this circle around me that was lifting me up," she says. In 2006, she started a new chapter of her life, giving birth to a son whom she loves as deeply as she loved Rocco. This year, she reopened her yoga studio, after a few years' hiatus, and has already developed a strong student base. "Yoga was the first thing Rocco and I ever did together," she recalls. "I knew I had to live my best life in his honor. I always had that in the back of my mind, even in the darkest days."



"Yoga allowed me to move the grief through my being."



Karen Blanc

|| Chester, New Jersey

Chronic pain threatened to immobilize her, but she fought the odds.

Karen Blanc was 34 when she began having severe joint pain and stiffness. Her hands became so stiff she couldn't do everyday things like braid her daughter's hair or brush her own teeth. Soon, she started to lose her athletic ability. She'd always taken intense pleasure in running and was even training for a marathon. "I remember the moment when I realized I wasn't going to make it home from an easy six-mile run," she says. "I got very depressed. I didn't know what was wrong with me."

Soon after, a specialist diagnosed her with rheumatoid arthritis and, even with medication, told her intense physical activity was off-limits because it could increase inflammation and further harm her joints. She had to limit herself to low-impact exercise like walking. In 2010, Karen had a partial replacement of her right hip, hoping it would improve mobility, but she spent two more years in pain before discovering that she'd

had a bad reaction to the metal implant and needed to have the surgery redone.

Six weeks after the second hip surgery, Karen was given the green light to do yoga, and tried her first hot yoga class. The heat and flowing movement relieved the pain in her joints. Soon, she was attending class several times a week. For the first time in more than a decade, she was able to be active without pain, breaking the cycle that's so common for rheumatoid arthritis sufferers who avoid movement because of pain, which only makes their joints stiffer and more painful.

In yoga, Karen rediscovered the joy of setting and achieving intense physical goals. But with three hip replacements, she was afraid of falling and further damaging a joint that would be hard to repair. Gradually, she gained strength and confidence, mastering Tree, Crow, and finally Headstand. "I'll never forget the first time I did a Headstand in the center of the room," she says. "It felt like a huge victory."

Two of Karen's children, now ages 19 and 13, have been diagnosed with juvenile arthritis. This has only fueled Karen's determination to stay active in yoga. "I've never wanted to be like, 'Woe is me, I have RA,'" she says. "I want to show my children that this disease doesn't have to define them or rob them of the things they love."

"My disease doesn't have to define me or rob me of the things I love."

De West

|| Boulder, Colorado

To become a mother after 40, she transformed her practice—and surrendered.

Six weeks before her wedding in 2004, De West underwent surgery to remove ovarian cysts. At 39 years old, she desperately wanted to have a child and hoped she'd be able to get pregnant after recovering. And she did, just a year into her marriage, but she miscarried—while teaching yoga. "I was inspired that I could get pregnant, but devastated by the loss," she says.

De started doing research and self-inquiry to understand fertility and her own body. For 10 years, she'd had a dedicated Ashtanga Yoga practice, doing two and a half hours of the vigorous, athletic form of yoga nearly every day. Now, she started adapting her practice to follow the rhythms of her cycle, rather than religiously



"I learned to ride the uncertainty and allow myself to hope."

following a set routine. For instance, in the phase after ovulation when pregnancy was possible, she would focus on restorative and yin poses, and more relaxation and meditation.

"The practice would change based on what I felt was most nourishing, what would make me feel more whole and grounded," says De. And, through this process of tuning into her feelings, she also learned to be more tender and patient with herself. "My practice became about loving my body, my ovaries, and my uterus, even when I was frustrated," she says.

Still, she didn't get pregnant. And that's when she began to rely on yoga's internal, spiritual teachings. "Every month, there would be a

wave of grief," she says. "Through my practice, I would recognize the sadness, moving through it and allowing myself to hope again. Yoga helped me ride the uncertainty and deal with what was right in front of me. It helped me surrender."

It was only when she truly surrendered—giving up on pregnancy and making an appointment with an adoption agency—that De got pregnant again, a year after her miscarriage. Today, her biological daughter is seven, and she sees yoga as a tool to help her ride the waves of parenthood. "My attachment to my practice has changed," she says. "Now I do yoga in my kitchen while I'm making dinner because that's when I have time!"

Brettan Hawkins

Nashville, Tennessee

When a parent died too soon, she learned how doing nothing could change everything.

In November 2013, Brettan Hawkins, a vinyasa yoga teacher and writer, lost her father to cancer. Six days later, her mother-in-law died of heart disease. Brettan and her husband were devastated, and their lives felt chaotic and unfamiliar. Brettan, now 33, felt lost without her father, her "favorite person in the world." And, yoga, which she'd always turned to as an outlet on tough days, was suddenly not the answer. She went from a vigorous six-day-a-week practice to nothing. "I couldn't even touch my mat, which scared me," Brettan says. She didn't want to feel the sadness and anger she was afraid would come up during practice. "I could picture myself in Savasana in tears, and I didn't want to go there," she says. Instead, she and her husband leaned on each other, and their siblings, and tried to get help with talk therapy.

Three months passed before Brettan came back to yoga, and in an unexpected way. Before her loss, she'd been regularly sharing pose selfies and inspiring posts about her practice with thousands of online followers. When she shared that yoga wasn't helping her during this time, she was met with a swell of disappointment. "There were people who seemed upset—who were like, 'You have a bump in the road

and you just stop practicing?'" she recalls. But one person had a helpful suggestion: "To take out my mat and just lie on it. Just see what comes," she says. And she did just that. She unrolled her mat, lay down, and simply felt what it was like to be there. "I realized that things didn't have to go back to being normal in X number of days or months," she says. "It felt good not to pressure myself to move on."

Brettan had just moved to Nashville, so she went looking for a new studio. She found a teacher, with a mellower practice than she was used to, who encouraged her to listen to her breath and slow down. She began to be more gentle with herself. "Yoga is about letting go of your ego, not having to be perfect," she says. "I've learned you don't always have to be OK."

As for her online presence, she doesn't post yoga selfies anymore; instead, she's focusing on taking care of herself. "My yoga practice has helped me realize that every day is going to be different," she says. "My world isn't the same as it was a year ago, and I'm not the same. I'm grateful every day for my husband and our bond, and the family we do have left. And for putting one foot in front of the other." 🧘



"Yoga is about letting go of your ego, not having to be perfect."

Brettan Hawkins practices Wild Thing, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2013.



Sally Wadyka is a writer and editor in Boulder, Colorado. Additional reporting by Carmel Wroth.

De West, her husband, Stephen West, and their daughter in 2012.



NOTEBOOK AND TORN PAPER: ISTOCK; DE WEST (POSE): MARY PANTIER; JOE DAILEY: COURTESY OF JOE DAILEY; NICK MONTOYA (2): BONNIE GALLO; CLAIRE COPERSINO: COURTESY OF CLAIRE COPERSINO; KAREN BLANC: BRIGID STAGG; DE WEST: (HEADSHOT) ANJA CHAPSKA, (FAMILY SHOT) MARY PANTIER; BRETTAN HAWKINS: (HEADSHOT) STONE GRANDALL, (POSE) COURTESY OF BRETTAN HAWKINS



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25 Days Of Giveaways Sweepstakes: Official rules at YogaJournal.com/25days. No purchase necessary. Winners will be selected in a random drawing on or about January 1, 2014 among all eligible entries received.

in focus

Readers share photos of their snowga practice.



"I practiced in the snow at Le Brévent Ski Area in the French Alps. My toes were numb, but I love that this photo portrays the power of nature and yoga in a single image."

Alejandra Campos,
Chamonix Mont-Blanc, France



"I'm grateful for the balancing and awakening experiences that yoga has allowed me to explore. Ever since I returned to my hometown three years ago, my yogic journey has grown immensely. I'm now the happiest and stablest I've ever been."

Lisa Peters, Grande Prairie, Alberta

connect

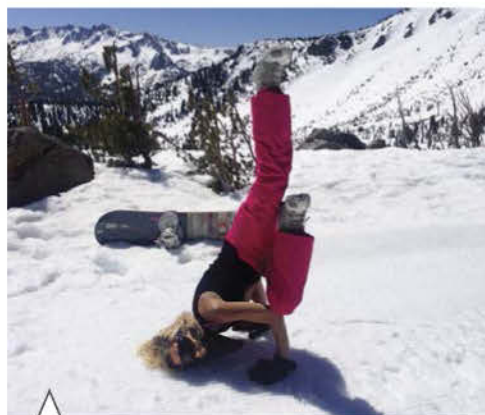


"Last winter during the polar vortex, my husband and I went for a walk in Dormont Park, Pennsylvania. I stopped to jump into a snowy Scorpion Pose."

LA Finfinger, Pittsburgh

"This is a shot of shovel-wielding Side Plank in a blizzard to show the snow depth. My wife braved the cold to snap this picture."

Tim Glover,
Raytown, Missouri



"This is my 'Fallen Snow Angel Pose,' taken during a day of shredding at Mammoth Mountain in California for my spring break 2014."

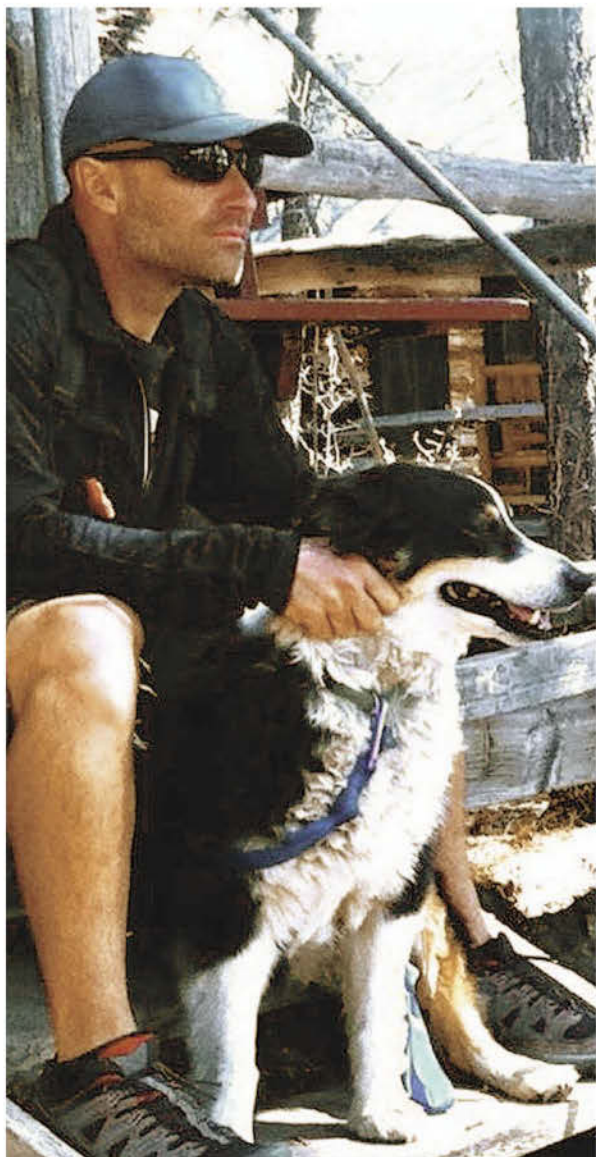
Sharon Isherwood, Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California

**Shine a light on
your teacher!**

Send nominations
to [letters@
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Nick Mancini

This man's man of yoga in Flagstaff, Arizona, helps military veterans find their inner warrior.



A former personal trainer and outdoor-adventure leader turned yoga teacher, Nick Mancini is all about the pragmatic and highly physical part of the practice. His students tend to be just as tough as their teacher. Over the last 15 years, Mancini, who studied Ashtanga in San Francisco with Larry Schultz (teacher to the Grateful Dead in the late '60s and early '70s), has taught yoga to prison inmates, active Marines, recovering addicts, and veterans.

Is there a reason you work primarily with men?

I've always associated my asana practice with a process of destruction—never looking to acquire anything but rather destroying what's in the way. I go directly into the suffering, into the tightest part of the muscle or tissue. This barbaric way of clearing space is not for everyone, but it does appeal to a demographic that would not practice yoga otherwise. These are my people.

Do you have female students?

In the past, my public classes were mostly women because, well, more women practice yoga than men. However, I think there are a lot of women out there with aggressive energy, and they get a lot of fun out of my intense, highly physical asana practices.

What do you try to inspire in your students?

My whole objective is transformation—physical and spiritual. For those looking to transform, being taken to their aerobic threshold is where the change happens. Walls of ego and illusion are pushed back and dissolved; the warrior within who was strong enough to begin this whole process in the first place becomes more prevalent.

What's the top thing you've learned through teaching?

It's that I never know what or who I'm going to get in each class. When someone comes to practice, I have no idea what that person has been through that particular day or within this particular lifetime. To consider that while I'm teaching requires an enormous amount of empathy and responsibility. It forces me to honor everyone, everywhere, across the board.

Why yoga?

Life can be chaotic—especially when the walls start closing in. Yoga discharges trauma and promotes healing. It cleanses the body and wakes us up to nonviolent communication. I realized right away, the first time I practiced, that yoga could save the world! **JESSIE LUCIER**

To learn more about Mancini, visit southwestbikepackers.com.

LAURA ELIZABETH

in the DETAILS

Mancini shares a few of his favorite things.

Pose

Mountain Pose helps me reside in my heart and brain with deliberation.

Book

I will read anything by Navy SEAL Michael Jaco and Chuck Palahniuk—the author of *Fight Club*.

Local hangout

Pay-N-Take—a small bar in Flagstaff where you can serve yourself a beer and hear adventure stories.

Meal

Spaghetti and meatballs is in my DNA. My love of this dish speaks to my Italian heritage.

Escape

Havasupai Indian Reservation in the Grand Canyon is the most beautiful place I've been.

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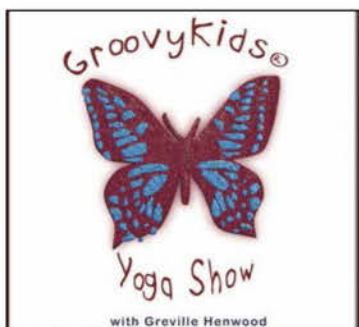


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Safe haven

A teacher in San Francisco helps homeless families find a reprieve and even a path to a better life. By Karen Macklin

AS A TEEN GROWING UP in the Washington, DC, area in the 1980s, yoga teacher Kate Holcombe remembers seeing the homeless population suddenly increase. Changes in federal funding for low-income housing and services for the mentally ill meant more people living on the street. Holcombe often shared food and conversation with the people she met. “It didn’t seem right to me that people would walk by them on the street and ignore them,” says Holcombe. “These were human beings in need.”

That experience was one of the motivations that led her to study social work in college and, after training in therapeutic yoga, to launch her service organization, the Healing Yoga Foundation, in 2006 in San Francisco, to share yoga with people in need, including veterans, low-income kids, and cancer patients. Since 2006, Holcombe has held weekly classes for the homeless, reaching about 60 families a year, at Compass Family Services, a nonprofit helping families get off the street.

While food and shelter obviously come first for a person without a home, yoga practice is a valuable complement to traditional services, Holcombe says. Living and sleeping on the streets causes high levels of anxiety and depression, as well as physical woes like back pain and insomnia. Yoga helps people to manage their mental state and physical health, and can thus empower them to make lasting changes in their lives, such as taking steps to find permanent housing or seek help for addictions.

At her weekly classes, she teaches poses, breathing practices, visualization, and deep relaxation. Yoga class is a place where her students feel safe enough to relax, she says,

and from that calm state, make better life choices. For homeless parents in particular, wracked by fears about their children’s safety, yoga’s calming techniques can be invaluable. One of Holcombe’s students, a young father of an infant daughter, was

trying to recover from heroin addiction and find housing and work. When he finally got a phone interview for a job, he asked the employer to call him just after yoga class because that’s when he felt most centered.

“The yoga philosophy teaches us that there’s a witness or light at our core that is pure, perfect, and unchanging,” Holcombe says. Understanding this, she says, can help students realize they’re not defined by their tough circumstances, and give them confidence to take steps to improve their lives.

Holcombe often lends a hand with childcare during her classes so parents can have a moment of calm. “When the parents feel more attuned to themselves, they’re better able to care for their kids,” she says. “And if the kids in our society feel more connected and loved, it helps us all.”

Kate Holcombe teaches weekly classes for homeless parents and children in San Francisco.



Serve the homeless

If you’d like to donate or volunteer, several groups nationwide, including these, offer yoga to the homeless:

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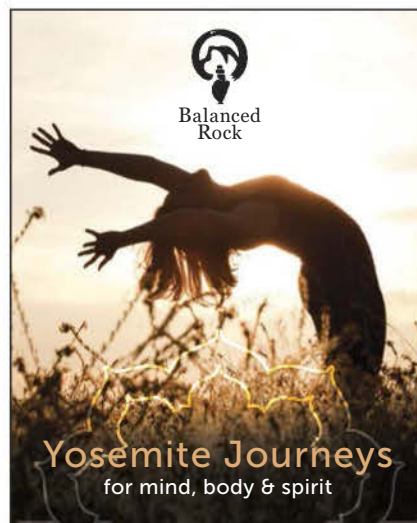


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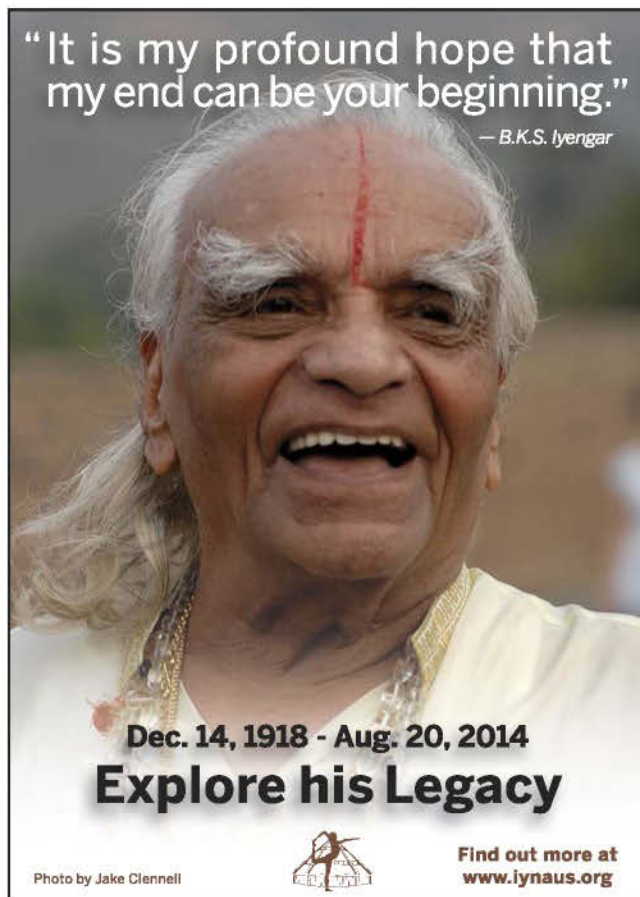
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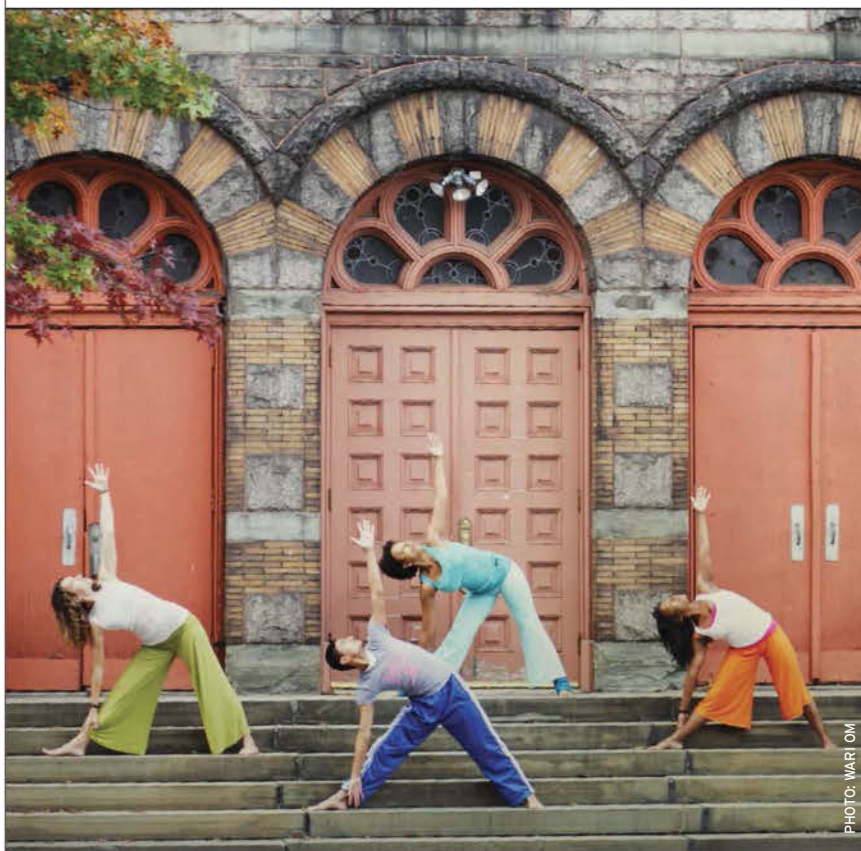
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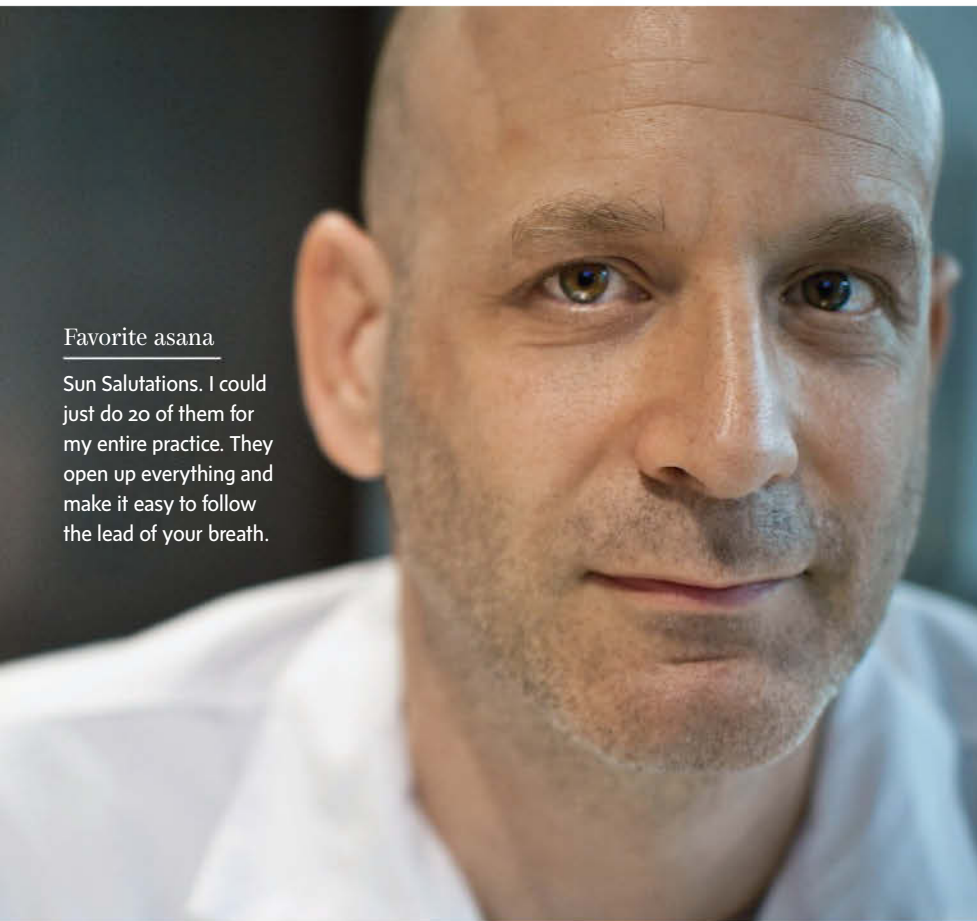
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Favorite asana

Sun Salutations. I could just do 20 of them for my entire practice. They open up everything and make it easy to follow the lead of your breath.




I wish I'd found yoga earlier. I do Ashtanga; I started about 12 years ago. It just worked for me. Mysore was all about feeling that connection with the movement and the breath, and I thought, 'This is the way it's supposed to be.' Had I started earlier, I would have a better understanding of it, and maybe I would have been able to travel to Mysore and study with some of the founders.

I was a working chef when I started yoga. I found myself a lot more centered, I felt better, I had more energy. Yoga helps me with stress. It certainly helps me with focus. I'm on my feet a lot, so doing yoga, and doing lifts and folds, helps with lengthening your spine and loosening things up so they don't hurt as much.

I met my wife at the studio. I actually practiced next to her for a year without saying a word to her. One day it happened that we were in the hallway at the same time and just started talking, and that was it. Now I think she prefers doing yoga without me because I lose focus whenever I'm practicing with her.

I don't meditate. They always put sign-ups for after Sunday practice, to chant and have a discussion, and everyone's always asking if I'm going to go, and I'm like, 'No way, are you kidding me?' That's what yoga is for them, and that's great. I'm not dissing it; it just doesn't work for me.

I don't understand when someone says, 'I don't do yoga, I'm not flexible.' For me, yoga is not a workout. It's a way to be better in touch with my inner self. I could practice for the next 30 years and I may never be able to get into Lotus, but that doesn't mean that I'm not practicing yoga. In the end, when we're old and frail and still practicing, all we have is our breath. 

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